



HELEN

A STORY OF

THINGS TO BE

By LU WHEAT









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HELEN

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Lu Wheat

# HELEN

*A STORY OF THINGS TO BE*

BY

LU WHEAT

Author of "The Smiling Book," "The Third Daughter," etc.

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By LU WHEAT

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DEDICATED TO  
ONE I LOVED

AND IN MEMORY OF THE  
DAYS WE SPENT TOGETHER  
UNDER THE LIVE OAK TREES  
OF SOUTH PASADENA

2134060





## PREFACE

It was predicted many years ago that the great mountain ranges, the leagues upon leagues of untrammelled space, and the evanescent color of the landscape in Southern California would write themselves upon the characters of those who wrought there; and the prophecy seems to be coming true. The out of door life, the never ceasing marvel of bloom, the evening glow, all seem to conspire with each other to evolve in the beholder new modes of thought.

Perhaps thus grown, one is not so rugged as the blizzard-defying man, nor so ultra-respectable as those whom we designate as "Yankee," but he is large with faith in humanity and untiring in the service of the commonwealth. If Helen is overdrawn it is only because she feels the moods and tenses and inflections of the land. As the Bedouin loves the sand, and as the Chinaman loves Cathay, so does the Californian love the gray green hills and the fierce pure air that colors his work and whispers to his soul. Nowhere else does humanity grope so surely toward sunlit mountain peaks; nowhere else does the mind answer to the stimulus of the beautiful as it does there. If the old Californian sees in Helen a child of his own, the object of this little book will have been accomplished.

LU WHEAT.

Los Angeles, California.



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HELEN



## CHAPTER I

“No sheltered room, or school, can commune with me.”

— *Walt Whitman.*

THE old adobe house in which William Andrews lived stands upon a knoll overlooking a beautiful valley in southern California. Thick walled and deep windowed, it bears testimony to the early days when labor was cheap and material was gathered from the immediate vicinity in which it was used.

Ten pillars on each side, hewn from trees in a neighboring cañon, support a roof, beneath which are spacious rooms and wide verandas. At the back of the house, acres and acres of mesa land undulate toward the mountains, while the tinkle of bells and the barking of dogs tell of sheep fattening lazily on the rich burr clover.

The one dark cloud that hung over the life of Andrews, and colored all his days, was that while he was still young the grim hand of Death had torn his wife from his side. When he first saw that she was dead, he put his great strong arms around his only child and denied that there was any God. But, later, he strengthened under the ordeal and accepted the malign aspects of life as part of a plan which in the end he believed would be good.

One morning, just after breakfast Andrews drew his chair over to a window and sat looking out to-

ward the little square of ground that had been set apart for a graveyard. His forehead was knit, and his lips were drawn tightly together over his well-shaped teeth. An old hound that had lain dozing near the door got up and came over to him, looking wistfully into his face.

"Now, see there, Helen," Andrews said to his daughter, "haven't you noticed how often Nero rivets his eyes on me when we speak about mother? I verily believe he knows that she lies buried out there beyond the orchard."

Helen swallowed at a lump in her throat, but made no reply.

"It's too bad —" her father began again, but left the sentence unfinished, and, getting up, took his hat from a nail on the door-casing and went out.

His daughter looked after him with a mournful expression, yet uttered no word; when he had disappeared behind the woodshed she went to the table and, gathering the scraps into a basin, called Nero and set them before him on the veranda floor.

"Good old dog," she said, patting him on the head, "what did you mean when you looked that way at father?"

As she bent toward him, a ray of sunshine glinted across her shoulder and quivered for a moment upon her face, revealing an almost abnormal development of the spiritual. Her eyes were deep set in their sockets, with dark shadows thrown across them by the long lashes; and the quick play of thought in her sensitive features seemed to circle in a yellow radiance about her hair.



"You are a good dog," she continued, "can't you tell me what you think?"

Just then an Indian, who was chopping wood near by, laid down his ax and looked off toward the mountains.

"Do you feel it?" asked Helen.

"Feel what?" queried old Joe.

"Something mysterious in the air this morning."

"No," answered the Indian, "I feel nothing, but the heat coming in from the desert. It will be cooler when the sea breeze comes up."

"Oh," said Helen, "that is not what I mean. Father is not happy this morning. He talked about mother and then said that he wanted to give me some of the cattle and then Nero acted queerly."

"It's nothing but the heat," replied Joe.

Helen picked up the empty basin and went back into the house. A Chinaman took the dish and piled it with others in the sink.

"Too muchee hot," said he, "cut wood to-day no can do."

"No," said Helen, "you and Joe can both work under cover. There is mustard to winnow and burrs to pick out of the wool."

Sing Hi smiled and going out for an armful of wool said to the Indian "Velly good girl, not muchee work to-day."

"Yes, heap good" answered the Indian.

## CHAPTER II

As Andrews passed out, he stopped at the woodshed and picked up a coil of hair-rope which he slipped lightly over his arm and then went on to the barn. A pinto pony spied the rope and knowing that it had to do with cattle, dug her nose into the manger and chewed voraciously.

"Oh, I know you, Mandy," Andrews said. "You're not so hungry as you make believe. You don't want to work, but you must." At this he slipped a Spanish bit into the horse's mouth and led her back to the kitchen door. Setting one foot firmly upon the veranda, he called:

"Helen, I say, Helen! I am going to drive up a bunch of the cattle and you can come out and take your pick."

"Oh, I don't want any of them, father. I have done the best I could with the work since mother died; but I don't want to be paid for it."

"Yes, Helen," her father answered seriously, "but you know how I feel about it. Mother always said that a woman's time was worth as much as a man's. I don't want her to look down upon me and see that I haven't done the square thing by you. Sometimes I wonder whether she knows how I have let the care of the home fall on your young shoulders."

The daughter came out upon the veranda, and, with an impulsive movement, caught her father's hand and kissed it; but still insisted that she did not wish any of the stock.

Andrews took no notice of her objection, but drew the cinch tighter under the mare's belly and prepared to mount. As he did so the pony put back her ears in a manner calculated to inspire fear; at which Helen patted the mare's sensitive nose and said apologetically:

"Mandy's tired! Sam rode her to Serrano yesterday and hobbled her last night, and she's not had time to eat."

Her father, paying no attention to these excuses, took one end of the lariat in his hand and swung lightly into the saddle. Mandy understood and turned toward a mesa, where the cattle were falling into line, with their heads toward an old windmill that creaked in the cañon below. Seeing that no further parley was intended, Helen spoke again:

"Well, Father, if you insist upon giving me anything, give me Mandy. There are plenty of horses on the ranch, but I like Mandy."

"Why," exclaimed Andrews in surprise, "of course, you can have Mandy! I didn't know that you liked her. She's a stubborn little brute, and if she wills not to go that's the end of it she won't go. But you can have her. She knows enough: She can walk a log and tell quicksand the minute she sees it."

With a perceptibly lightened expression his face,

Andrews turned the horse's head back toward the veranda and began to take off the lariat.

"Of course, you can have Mandy," he repeated. "I wonder I did not think of it before. Now you can go over to Alvarado's and see the girls whenever you wish; and there's a new neighbor a couple of miles down the river whom you can visit."

At this, he put the bridle into Helen's hand. She kissed him again, and then, turning to the pony, said:

"They shan't work you so hard any more, Mandy, and you shall have sugar —"

"You'll spoil her," interrupted her father. "Broncos are obstinate creatures, and petting makes them worse, but then — she's yours — go ahead!"

Helen gathered up her skirts and was putting one foot in the stirrup when old Joe came limping up with an air of concern upon his face. He executed a curve with his elbow, implying that the back of Mandy Jones might hump up and pitch Helen off. At this Helen laughed, and as she expressed no fear, the Indian felt carefully for the tightness of the girth, tested the bridle, and lifted the girl into the saddle.

The two men watched her gallop gracefully away; then each went to his respective duty.

There was nothing out of the ordinary about the pony that Andrews had given to his daughter. She was just a plain bronco, rejoicing in the name of "Mandy Jones," an euphonious name and very suitable, for Jones — over on the Mojave — raised her; and Jones' little girl, Mandy, was buried in

the shifting sands of the desert: hence the "Mandy," and hence the "Jones."

After the death of the little girl, Jones was homesick and wanted to go back East, so it came to pass that he offered to sell the pony and Andrews, being in need of a herding horse, went to look at her.

"She's as gentle as a dog," said Jones. "My little girl could crawl right under her and not get hurt."

This recommendation Andrews took with several grains of salt, for there was too much white in Mandy's eye and she puffed out too much when the cinch was tightened to be amiable. But he bought her, notwithstanding, because he was looking for toughness rather than docility. He wanted a horse that he could ride all day and all night, if need be, and she filled the bill exactly. He knew by her looks that she could run sixty miles a day and live on mesquite beans a month at a time. So he took two twenty-dollar gold pieces from a leather bag and handed them to Jones, saying:

"I reckon she'll do."

Jones took the money, and Andrews swung himself astride of the horse. She went like a top, throwing up the sand behind her heels, and glancing suspiciously into the chaparral as though her mission on earth was to look for stray cattle. Andrews patted her on the neck and said: "Jones has trained you well, but you look stubborn."

Mandy paid no attention to the compliment, but sped on, bearing her new owner safely to his own

home. Three days later, however, she had pulled up her stake pin, jumped a wire fence, and gone back to Jones. The hired man, who toiled over fifty miles of desert to bring her back, said: "She ought to be shot," but Jones said: "I knew she'd come back."

Such was the little bronco that Helen accepted in full payment of services rendered as housekeeper on her father's ranch. In sheer delight of ownership, she galloped up the road. The rein lay lightly on Mandy's neck, and because the sagacious little beast liked burr clover better than salt grass, she took to the higher levels. As the path wound up and up, great stretches of valley came to Helen's view; while forty miles away the Sierra Madras sparkled with evanescent color. The far peaks caught the rays of the morning sun and sent them floating across deep cañons. The great boulders caught them, and changed from common rock to precious stones; the ravines seemed like deep places packed full of rainbow-tinted haze. On Arrow Head, the shafts of granite looked like beaten gold, while not far from where Helen stood a mirage was forming around an old sahuaro which caused the tree to take on enormous proportions. Its shaggy and blackened trunk quivered and seemed nodding to her while below in the deep blue mirage water each leaf and branch was reflected and magnified.

The view inspired in the girl thoughts akin to worship. All the world seemed to her divine. The only evidence she had that any other human being



besides herself saw this grand panorama was a slim column of smoke that rose straight up into the air, several miles to the eastward. As the girl watched it, a man mounted his horse and crept along a steep road until he reached level ground, then rode off, swinging a lariat above his head. The vast space as this lone figure sped across the horizon added to the tension that had hung over all the events of the morning. Never before had Helen ridden out into this wonderful sea of color and felt its spell as she did now. She turned to a high wall of purple rock, and touched it with her hand to make sure that she saw correctly; then, with a little shudder, she turned Mandy's head toward home.

Old Joe was anxiously waiting for her. He knew that as a child Helen had loved to wander alone, and tradition told him that evil spirits sometimes conspired with foxes to lure off young girls. No nurse was ever more devoted to the child entrusted to her care than was this crippled Indian devoted to the young woman whom he served and whose dead mother he held in loving remembrance. When he saw her coming, he left his work and stood ready to lead Mandy to the barn. But Helen declined his services.

"I will feed her and take all the care of her myself, dear old Joe," she said, "for I wish to become well acquainted with my new possession. You know I have foolish ideas about animals. Father says I am not practical; but since he has given Mandy to me I mean to try my own plans with her."

"Tell it to me what your plans are," said Joe doubtfully.

"You will only laugh."

"No, me not laugh," said Joe.

"Well," she began reluctantly, "it always seems to me that the animals we own ought to look up to us, somewhat as we look up to God. If it is so, we must love them just as we love people, must we not?"

"Nobody ever tried loving a bronco," said Joe. "Why not try your experiment on Nero?"

"Oh, Joe, you do not understand. I mean that everything that has life has rights. Don't animals have souls?"

"Yes, some of them; very bad souls, take, for instance, coyotes, they steal and fight. Is it not bad?"

"Oh, Joe, you don't understand," said Helen smiling, but still insisting upon leading Mandy to the barn.

As she went down the path she saw a little tuft of grass growing near a hydrant. She plucked it, and, offering it to Mandy, said:

"I don't believe you are stubborn. When you balk it's because somebody does things. Ain't it?"

At the barn she filled the manger with hay, gathering from one corner a nest-full of eggs that had been stealthily hidden away by an anxious hen. As she started back to the house, she chanced to look toward the orchard and was surprised to see a little girl walking aimlessly near the old shack where Joe slept. It was not usual to see a strange child



so far in the country and Helen's first thought was to go and question her; but at that moment she saw coming from the veranda a Mexican, who seemed intoxicated. When he met Helen he pointed to his mouth and muttered some words incoherently.

"Come with me to the kitchen," said Helen.

The Mexican shook his head, but pointed to the eggs, at the same time taking a soiled cotton handkerchief from his pocket and spreading it on the ground. Helen did not question him, but put the eggs in the handkerchief, saying: "I will give you food if you will come with me."

The Mexican made no answer, but gathered the four corners of the handkerchief into a knot and went toward the orchard, calling as he did so: "Luisa! Luisa!"

The little girl waited and Helen saw the man seize her ruthlessly by the hand and drag her into the chaparral. She called Joe and together they followed the pair until within speaking distance. When the Indian said authoritively:

"Whose child be you drag along?"

"Mine seester's chile. She bees giff to me."

"Where is your sister?" asked Helen gently. "Perhaps I can ride over and see her. I have a horse of my own."

"She leefs in Los Angeles. She bees seek."

Helen requested the Mexican to let her take the child back to the house but he pointed with a long stick that he carried toward a sheep camp high up on the mesa and the child tremblingly took the path. Helen and Joe watched them for a time and then

returned to their work, but the episode made a great impression on the young woman's mind. She could not forget the nervous and timid face or the thin little hand of the child. She could hear the name "Luisa" ring in her ears and somehow connect itself with the psychic strain that had hung like a dark shadow over all the events of the morning.

### CHAPTER III.

WHEN Andrews came in to dinner he found the house in order, while the smell of bacon and coffee gave him the appetite he had lacked for his breakfast. He joked Helen a little about her pony, saying: "You have the only herding horse on the river that never lets a steer get away. I should like to hire you to help comb the country at the next round up."

"Yes," Helen returned, "I really believe I could ride all day."

"Well, I shall count on you when I need help."

"Do you know the tricks of a rope?" Joe teased.

"Can you tell how old a hoof-print is?"

"Oh, yes; I know a little about such things."

Finally the Indian said in all seriousness: "You must have a Navajo saddle. I shall get you one. It's not so high of pommel, and lets you mount on either side — Indianwise."

"It's the very thing I should like! How kind of you to think of it, dear old Joe," Helen answered. As they chatted around the table, they were joined by a herder who had been for days out on the range, looking for lost cattle.

"Where were you this morning about eight o'clock?" Helen asked as soon as she saw him.

"I camped by a water-hole near Oro Grande last night. Why do you ask?"

"I took a ride on Mandy this morning, and as I stood on a high point near Arrow Head I saw the smoke from a campfire," replied Helen.

"Did you see who was there?" queried the herder.

"I watched the smoke for a time and then saw a man climb a steep hill and ride off alone."

"Did you have company?" asked Andrews.

"Yes," replied the herder. "A tenderfoot spread his blanket beside mine last night."

"Who's he working for?" inquired Andrews.

"He ain't working. He never could work at the cattle business. The meekest bronco on the range would buck him off, but he ain't to blame. He's Eastern."

"Did he say where he was from?" queried Andrews.

"Yes, all the way from Kansas. His name is Burlingham, and he's got a family camped somewhere in the river bottom."

"What's he doing out there alone?" said Helen, expressing interest.

"Oh, he's got some idea about a mine. It's lucky the greasers ain't no shots or they'd a-downed him long ago. He'd stampede the best behaved bunch of cattle on the range. His pack mule looked as though it was born before the flood. When I left, he was trying to fix the saddle on, so's not to tear the hide all off the mule's back."

"And you did not help him?" queried Helen.

"No, I had something else to do. I found a small bunch of cattle in an arroyo and started

them toward a cañon where the feed is better."

"How were they branded?" asked Andrews.

"Some had the 'diamond O' and some were yours."

Then the herder talked learnedly of fileria and bunch grass and informed Andrews that the burr clover had nearly all been picked up by the sheep, — that what had not been eaten, they had carried off in their wool. Then, with a prophetic air, he added:

"Some of the cattle have already left the mesa and are browsing on the willows, and the coyotes are hanging around the sheep camps. That's always a sign of a dry season."

His words brought back the anxious lines to Andrews' face, and he began to speculate as to how he should get his stock through, if no rain came, and to recount past experiences when many cattle had died from starvation.

"I think," he remarked, "that I had better dry-plow the forty-acre lot and sow it in barley. If it rains ever so little, it will make feed; if not, I shall lose only a few sacks of grain."

"Yes, that's a good plan," the herder agreed, and added: "It is always too dry or too wet out here. One year it's a drought, and the next a flood! I like it better down in Texas. There, barring the grasshoppers and the cyclones, we 'most always have a crop."

"I know about Texas," Andrews replied, "and I'll take my chances in California every time."

"Do you remember seven years ago on the Santa

Maria ranch, when they lost nearly ten thousand head of stock?" inquired the herder. "The cattle and the sheep nearly all turned up their toes that year."

"It's too dreadful to think about!" Helen exclaimed, and then, turning to her father, she began to question him as to their own facilities for saving their stock in case the drought should continue.

"You haven't begun using the straw yet, have you?"

"No," her father answered with a smile at her concern. "We have three stacks not yet touched. It's poor feed, but cattle can pull through on it. I would feel safer, though if we had more bottom land. Willows are good to have in a dry year."

The herder, seeing that he had destroyed the cheer of the household with his gloomy predictions, hastened to add more hopefully:

"Oh, it's no use to worry yet. I don't suppose there's any immediate danger. It's only November. I've seen the rains hold off until Christmas and then have a good year."

Andrews denied that he was "worrying," but said that he would like to see it rain, and then, with deference to the opinion of a native Californian, he asked whether Don Alvarado had yet moved any of his stock.

"I haven't been over that way," replied the herder. "I was going to take Mandy this afternoon and do a little prospecting; but Joe tells me that you have sold her."

"Yes," Andrews said, "she has gone out of my



possession. But there are horses enough on the ranch — take any other one you like.”

“But I like Mandy Jones!”

To this broad hint, Helen paid no heed.

“She’s afraid you’ll drive her too hard,” said old Joe. “Being so tender-hearted is like her mother.”

“Yes,” and Andrews sighed heavily, “that was like mother, wasn’t it? I wonder if a man ever gets over the loss of a wife?”

Here Helen tried to divert her father’s attention by pouring him out a cup of coffee, and by telling her experiences of the morning.

“There was such a beautiful haze hanging over the mountains,” she said, “I rode right out into it; but it was hot — oh, so hot — and everything a-quiver.

“The yuccas are such weird, uncanny things,” she went on, “they always seem to be pointing with their great shaggy arms to some far-away place — they make one feel as though they really meant something!”

“It’s the rarified air,” the herder explained. “We fellows who live on the range don’t see visions out in the open. If a blackbird looks as big as an elephant, we know that the air is dry and the mirage is at work. A cool breeze blows it all away. I saw a coyote’s head, the other day, that looked as if it were just above water. I could have sworn that he was swimming. Then a draught came through the Cajon Pass and puffed the whole thing out.”

“That’s what I used to tell mother,” said An-

drews. "She was always seeing things. She never got used to the dry seasons, but when you have camped out awhile you learn the tricks that the air plays. Mandy knows—she never shies at a mirage."

"I know," said Helen, "but everything has seemed queer to-day. When I got home from my ride I saw a little girl in the orchard and she looked frightened. I wanted her to come with me into the house but the man who was with her would not permit her."

"Oh!" said the herder "that was the greaser up on the mesa. His sister is sick and he took the young one."



## CHAPTER IV

Two months had slipped away since William Andrews gave Mandy Jones to his daughter, and she had ridden the little bronco into every nook and corner of the surrounding country. Not often had she gone over to Don Alvarado's to see the girls; not often had she visited the neighbors down the river; but where the sand drove up in waves before the wind and where the rainbow-tinted lizard darted from bush to bush, she had ridden with love of nature in her heart and a desire to know the meaning of gigantic space and rolling leagues of fierce, pure air. Religion seemed to her something that grew on the desert — something with color and the odor of sage about it. The burning heaps of purple rock and the towering mountain peaks also seemed to her a part of its vast scheme.

"Can anyone paint the color and the stateliness of the landscape during the arid season?" Helen asked her father one day, as they sat looking off at San Antonio.

"Try it," said he. "Art may be your vocation. As for me, I pray hourly for rain. When rose and violet cover the gaunt wolf of hunger and despair, I fail to see its beauty."

"Forgive me, Father, I know I see only what

is pleasing to the eye, while a more practical mind sees the reality."

"I am not blaming you, daughter. At your age, I, too, had visions. And I followed them. You have just as much right to yours as I had to mine."

"Oh father, dear, tell me a little about yourself when you were at my age."

"About myself? Well one thing is sure. I was not an artist. If you have any genius for art or music you must give the credit to your mother. She reveled in color, and she sang divinely."

"But tell me, father, what did you do?"

"Well, Liberty was the divinity I sought for. And it was in pursuit of her that I came West. My father had been a colonel in the United States army but as he was killed in a skirmish with Indians soon after I was born, my mother naturally looked upon shoulder straps and buttons with dread. So she put me to the study of law under the protection of her father who was a dignified and conservative man that regarded the profession as the only one suited to a Southern gentleman. I think at times both my grandfather and my mother saw shadows in my face to make them doubt whether I could be held down to the routine of office work, but they held on to their purpose and I waded through the first year of my course. Then my grandfather died. After a short period of mourning I went back to college but death came again within six months and my mother followed her father to the grave. I then lacked only a year and a half of completing my law course, but as I thought it over,

I realized that I had pursued it — more to please my friends than to please myself. Having arrived at this conclusion I saw no reason for going on. Complaints and cross complaints, torts, prosecutions, the civil code and the penal code, all seemed to me as so much superfluous knowledge, and one day, in a revolt against the whole of civilization I turned my thoughts toward the then unknown West. Although it was there that my father had been killed, a fantastic specter beckoned me to come. The great Santa Fe trail forty miles wide by seven hundred long had a charm for me. Its very hugeness made me wonder who traversed such a vast highway, and whether the coyote myths of the Indians might not be as real as those of the Christian. I saw visions of the rattlesnake and the noosed rope and wondered if they were the equivalent of the lion and the unicorn. These things haunted me day and night until finally I left the scenes of my childhood to follow the strenuous life of the range."

"But what will I do, father? I cannot go West as you did. I cannot do anything to make money, for I hate the sordid stuff."

"Begin with a box of paints," smiled Andrews, "and, when the time comes, drift naturally to your place."

"What a lovely idea! To-morrow I shall try to mix the color of the mountains and the sand."

For many days Helen sketched and painted. The gray-green of the desert plants, the evanescent color of the sky; the outline of San Antonio, all came in daubs upon her canvas. But just as she

began to understand a little of the possibilities of her brush, a great change came over the country.

Dark clouds dragged and dripped across the hills, and gloom settled in the cañons. The sand lost its luster; the horizon line was low, and all about the sky was swiftly moving cumuli.

"Let us sing the Jubilate," cried Andrews. "The rain is coming!"

"'Oh, be joyful,'" commenced Helen, but paused: "The color has all gone out of the landscape father. I do not want it to rain."

Andrews laughed outright.

"Prayers for rain then should be reserved for those who need rain." Then, after a pause, he continued: "Paint the three trees. That will please old Joe."

"Yes," said Helen, "how fond he is of them. I believe he notices every new shoot they put forth."

"What testimony to the home-loving nature of man," said the father. "Because he was born beneath their wide-spreading branches, and because there his mother died and there his sister was married, he reverences the place and claims it for his own, and who shall say that his title is not as good as mine."

"And Padre Tomás claims them, too father."

"Yes, because the arm of one has grown horizontally across the upright trunk of another, thus forming a perfect cross. The priests have always claimed and regarded them with something of superstitious awe."

"Now if I claim them in the name of art?"

"We shall have a case of adverse claimants, *minus* the adversary," concluded the father.

"How lovely!" cried Helen. "Each abstracting what he needs, and leaving the residue for his brothers; that is true religion. But is there any law for it?"

"Yes, divine law, but not yet reduced to a statute. In this case, however, Joe's title holds better than mine, for I should have cut the trees down long ago had he not been so fond of them."

For weeks the rain continued to fall in silvery drops upon Andrews' parched fields. Helen soon saw that the springing grass, the crystal pools and the prodigality of bloom were worthy her brush and lay a new color scheme upon her palette. So well did she succeed that her father pulled her head down on his shoulder one day and said:

"I think you should be sent away to study. Your love of nature may make an artist or a poet of you some day."

"If I could learn art and use it for the relief of suffering I might try, but there are so many tragedies in the world that I begin to see a great many things to do, besides paint," said Helen doubtfully.

"You must not worry over tragedies. They will go on, no matter how you try to prevent them."

"But sometimes a feeling comes over me that all the world is bent on harm. Did mother worry over peoples' sorrows?"

"Yes, she often did, but she was very practical."

Her aim was to allay the misery at her own door and be content."

"Tell me what she did, father."

"She adopted old Joe, for one thing. We found him under the tree with a broken leg, his tribe gone on, and he as wild as any animal."

"Oh, poor old Joe! No wonder he loves her memory."

As they sat talking, a young Spaniard drove up to the gate and alighted. His sombrero was dripping, and his clothing wet through and through. Notwithstanding his discomfort, he walked with dignity and addressed Andrews as Señor and Helen as Señorita, then said: "My father has sent me to ride along the zanja and see that the head gates are all closed."

"Really," exclaimed Andrews, "does your father think that the storm is becoming dangerous?"

"Not yet, but if the river should turn into an irrigating ditch, it might make trouble," answered the Spaniard.

"So it might, so it might," returned Andrews. "Please give your father my best wishes, and say that I appreciate his kindness."

The Spaniard bowed, and, mounting his shivering horse, rode away, keeping close to the irrigating ditch until he was out of sight.

"How kind of Don Alvarado to send his son out in the storm," said Helen. "But tell me, father, do you think there is any danger?"

"It has been raining for a month," he replied,



"and the ground is so saturated with water now that it won't hold much more."

"And we can do nothing?" she questioned.

"No. Nothing can stand against the weather."

As he spoke, they could hear the roaring of the river, as great pieces of the bank were chewed off and cast into the water to be carried down stream and deposited wheresoever the tide willed.

Later in the afternoon, the gloom increased; great leaden clouds drifted up against the wall of high Sierras, and the rain fell in sheets. All night Andrews lay awake, listening to the downpour upon the roof, and in the morning, as soon as he could see, arose and, with a suspicion born of fear, peered long and anxiously toward the lower levels of his ranch. In one of the fields, which was fenced with barbed wire, were his thoroughbred cows. For their safety he now began to feel anxious. He did not wait for breakfast, but pulled on a pair of rubber-boots and said to his daughter:

"I must take a look at the river; if the bridge should go out, or the bank give way, there would be rough work before another night."

He had gone but a short distance when he met a couple of his neighbors, carrying shovels upon their shoulders.

"Good-morning," said Andrews, "and not so 'good' either. It looks rather dubious. Have you been up the stream?"

"Yes," answered John Stanford. "Yes, and the bank is in bad shape. We must fix it. If the

water once breaks over — nobody can tell where it will go."

"It ought to have been fixed long ago," grumbled his companion. "Now, I suppose we are elected to work in the rain all day. Have you any barbed wire at your place, Andrews?"

"Yes, I will go to the barn and get it."

"Better bring an ax too," suggested young Stanford, "we must cut some willow poles and run a fence along the low places. Isn't that the best thing to do, 'Doc.'?"

"Yes," replied the other man. "I've lived on this river for twenty-five years, and I don't know of anything better to hold water than a barbed-wire fence. The barbs catch weeds and trash enough to check the current, and then the sand drops. You can bank up more sand that way in one night than all the horses in the country could haul in a month."

When Andrews returned he bore upon his shoulders a coil of barbed wire, and, following close upon his heels, was Sing Hi.

Although Sing Hi was first of all a cook, he could in an emergency turn his hand to almost any kind of work.

"Alle samee China," said he "too much lain no good." Then feeling in his hair where he had concealed a charm that had for three thousand years caused the waters to abate in his own Cathay, he fell to work with the stolid indifference of his race.

The little party followed the bank, stopping every now and then to drive saplings and stretch



wire, until a solid fall of water compelled them to take refuge under the bridge.

"We may as well go to the house," Andrews said. "We can do nothing while it pours down like this."

They gathered up their tools and fell into line like men accustomed to follow the trail. Andrews led the way, then came "Doc." Stoner, whose title represented much knowledge of sick and lame horses. Lagging in the rear were Nero and Maria — the latter an old sheep dog, that had once been valued at a thousand dollars, but now was of no value at all, owing to old age and a crippled foot, occasioned by a rattlesnake bite. Old and lame though she was, she and Nero had had their fill of pleasure, since the rain had driven out of their holes all manner of small animals, more or less disabled — more or less willing to be shaken.

Helen, who had been watching anxiously, saw her father leading the party of men and dogs toward the house and knew that nothing must stand in the way of dinner. She had been wrestling all morning with a churning that frothed and sputtered; but now she wheeled the churn aside and hurried for an armful of wood.

When the men entered, she made no pretense of ceremony, but kept on with preparations for the meal. The Chinaman offered to assist her, and she gave him a pan of apples to pare. Then John Stanford, taking the cue, wheeled the churn out and began turning the crank.

"It's kind of you to churn," said Helen. "It's a horrid, headachy job."

"I don't claim to know much about it," he responded; "mother used to say that it was only elbow grease I used. Just the whys and wherefores of bringing the butter I don't pretend to understand."

Here "Doc." Stoner changed the subject.

"There won't be many gophers left if it keeps on raining like this."

"No. The alfalfa was pretty well peppered up with them, but I reckon this will fix 'em," returned young Stanford.

"But can you never imagine what it is to feel sorry for the poor things?" demanded Helen. "All the poor little people that live in holes are trapped and shot or drowned. Somehow, I can never get used to it. Father says I'm not suited to the ranch. He wants me to go away and study something."

"Study what?" asked John Stanford.

"Oh, I don't know! Perhaps I could learn to paint. Have you noticed how different the clouds are now from what they were in the summer? But when I paint them, they all look alike. Did you ever try to paint, Mr. Stanford?"

The young man laughed. "Only once," he said, "and then mother said I made a poor job of it."

"Dear me! Tell us about it. I often wonder if other people try to do the same things I do."

"Why, you must have seen it. It was our barn!"

Helen laughed at the tiny joke, and looked squarely into the eyes of her visitor. It took no great knowledge of human nature to see that he was

inoffensive and kind. His head was long and narrow. His thick, bushy hair was light yellow and straggled down over a pair of honest, blue eyes, in which lurked a "John the Baptist" expression. He pointed to his mother, as the one greater than himself, and rejoiced that she had impressed upon his young mind a sort of righteous anger against sinners.

While they talked, Helen's nimble fingers had peeled potatoes, taken a side of bacon from its nail on the wall and sliced enough to cover the bottom of the frying-pan.

"Break a dozen eggs into the bacon gravy," suggested her father. "I'm as hungry as a bear."

The eggs were fried, the apples stewed, and within half an hour a shuffling of feet under the table indicated that the hungry men were putting Helen's cooking to the test. The conversation was friendly and strikingly free from that kind of vulgarity which assumes too much. There was not the slightest attempt to manifest a feeling of caste even the Chinaman sitting down and eating with the others.

After dinner, they all went out upon the veranda to take a look at the sky. Although it was not yet two o'clock, the West was darkening as with signs of night.

"Heavens! how it rains," ejaculated Andrews. "I believe it would be wise to get those cattle out of the lower field. What do you think, Doc.?"

"If the river should break over, there wouldn't be enough of them left to pay for rounding up," replied that individual.

"Yes," added Stanford, "these fenced fields are

regular death-traps in a time like this. Give me the old Spanish style where a man's land went from mountain to mountain and the cattle took care of themselves."

As the storm drove on, every rift of the clouds was torn by falling sheets of water. The threatening blackness overhead and the sullen roar of the river convinced Andrews that he ought to liberate the cattle in the fenced field at once.

Peering through the gloom, he could make out that the imperiled animals had gathered at the upper end of the field and were standing, shivering and frightened, against the fence.

"I shan't wait another minute," he said, and started, with his two companions, to the barn.

Mandy Jones chanced to be the only horse in the stable, and she was hastily bridled and saddled, and the tools for cutting the wire fence were tied together and slung across the pommel. As Andrews tightened the cinch, Mandy looked back, showing the white of her eyes.

"It's a balky sign," said "Doc." Stoner, and with the shrewdness that comes of much acquaintance with balky horses, he patted Mandy affectionately on the nose.

"It never does a horse any good to be driven by a woman," said John Stanford.

Andrews, however, paid no attention to their remarks but swung confidently into the saddle. The mare again looked back and her legs stiffened.

"Helen has spoiled her," cried he in exasperation. "She was the best little saddle-horse on the

place, but now she has had her own way too long."

He used a rawhide whip freely, but Mandy would not move a step. Then "Doc." Stoner took a wisp of hay and drew a match. He had lighted it and was about to place it underneath the belly of the mare, when Helen, with no wrap, except a light jacket, came into the barn, and seeing what they were doing, cried out wrathfully:

"You shall not do it! No one shall torture her! She will go for me — I will ride her myself."

Andrews had never seen his daughter so angry. Her eyes flashed, and her face was white with rage. She took the bridle into her hand and turned the horse's head a little to the left, when she saw the Spanish bit.

"That cruel thing!" she stormed. "Take it off! I will not use it."

Young Stanford hastened to soothe her by removing the obnoxious bit and patting Mandy on the forehead. Helen, with great determination, examined the pony's mouth to see whether it had been cut by the bit and then requested her father to leave the business to her. Andrews protested and tried to soothe the girl, but finally alighted, saying as he did so:

"It is not a woman's place to go out in such a storm."

Helen, however, paid no attention to his words, but throwing her arm over Mandy's neck, she began talking to her much as a schoolboy might talk to his sweetheart.



"Poor dumb creature, I am glad you did balk," she said. "You'll go for me, won't you?"

With this, she stepped upon a box that chanced to be near, and, without assistance from anyone, sprang lightly into the saddle. Her nerves were steady and her brain was quick, as she said:

"Now go on, Mandy, it's getting worse every minute."

The pony started obediently and turned toward the field. Once she stumbled into a gopher hole and floundered like a porpoise, but soon righted herself and went bravely forward.

It was the work of but a few minutes to cut the wire and liberate the cattle. As soon as the fence was down, they wallowed their way to higher ground, the strong and courageous going first, the yearlings following after them. Helen cast her eyes over the bunch, as they passed her, and saw that one of her father's favorite Jerseys was not among them. She watched anxiously, hoping to see it bringing up the rear; but it was nowhere in sight.

The water was steadily rising, and the wind roared down from the mountain; but the girl urged her horse into the inundated pasture. For an hour they worked their way from one knoll to another until Helen had almost decided that it was useless to search farther, when Mandy, with the true instinct of the herding horse, pushed her way into a clump of willows, and there found the cow, drooling over a new-born calf. The shivering body of the tender little creature was bedraggled with mud, and

the wind whistled into its unaccustomed nostrils, almost taking its breath away.

Just then an unusually heavy gust beat the tiny thing to the ground and the mother whimpered over it like an anxious hound. Helen, for the moment, was undecided what to do; but, while she hesitated, the calf — with the persistency of a new-born thing, wobbled to its feet and stared, wonder-eyed, at the bedlam into which it had been born.

Helen drove her heel into Mandy's side and in a moment, cow, calf, and horse, were struggling in the water. At first, the little one faltered and tried to turn back, but it felt Mandy's hot breath on its flank and was soon swimming beside its mother.

It was a hard struggle, but at last the higher ground was reached and Helen rode triumphantly back to the barn. The men sent up a shout that shook the roof, as she entered.

"There's not another horse on the river that would have done it," cried Andrews.

"Nor another girl," added John Stanford, admiringly.

It was fortunate that there had been no delay in moving the cattle, for, as evening approached, it was apparent that all of the lowlands would be under water before morning. The *débris* piled against the railroad-bridge held back such a body of drift-wood that the trainmen did not dare to venture on the structure, and the engine stood puffing, wheel deep in mud.

Above the bridge, the bank had been cut out for a quarter of a mile by the indescribable force of

the current. Andrews, protected by rubber-coat and boots, waded out toward the lower levels, and found that the head gate of an old irrigation ditch had been torn away, and that nothing could now stop the torrent that was cutting across the fields, so lately regarded as his choicest farming land. He returned to the house in despair.

"You have no idea what this storm means," he said to Helen.

"What has happened, father?" she inquired.

"The river has taken down an old irrigating ditch and is changing the geography of the country."



## CHAPTER V

WILLIAM ANDREWS knew enough about law to see that the change in the river-bed might disturb the titles to a large number of small farms. He knew that the old Spanish grants were usually bounded by natural objects, such as rivers, mountains and trees, and he thought more than likely the San Gabriel river was Don Alvarado's south line. If so, the change might make trouble for years to come. Not only might he lose a large strip of his own land, but the whole community might become involved in neighborhood strife over their land.

As soon as the storm was over he sent for his friend, Mark Watkins, to come out and discuss with him what steps should be taken for having the record corrected, and each man's claim set out by meets and bounds. Scanting much litigation, the lawyer laid aside his business and presented himself at the Andrews' ranch.

This visit proved to be an event in Helen's life. Never before had she met a man with such an infinite capacity for learned conversation. To be sure much of it was about casualties. He told how Jones had sued Brown, and how somebody or other had a cloud on his title, or how some judgment had been returned unsatisfied.

But after a day and a night there came to the lawyer a riotous waste of words upon subjects nearer to Helen's understanding. He discussed the technique of her pictures with the air of a connoisseur; then went off upon theology, geology, or technology, with equal understanding. His wit, and the skillful way he quoted the wit of others, was a continued delight to both Andrews and his daughter. Sometimes a look or an accent told of thoughts that strayed from the straight and narrow path, but it passed off, leaving nothing more than a ripple on the smooth surface of the day.

This edition of Helen's life lasted a week when Mr. Watkins returned to Los Angeles and the girl resumed her wonted duties.

The incidents of the storm came back to her — her relation to the faithful Mandy; her rescue of the young calf and its great frightened eyes as it looked at her before it plunged into the water; the cruelty of the men who would light a fire under a balky horse; little Luisa and her sufferings — all came trooping back and brought with them a condition bordering on sadness. Her father saw it, but he had learned not to hamper Helen with talk, for, faithful and loving though she was, he knew how lightly she regarded the opinions of men, and how seldom she sought counsel of women. Once he renewed the subject of her going away to school, but she replied firmly:

"Father, I wish no teachers. I may never be a scholar or an artist, but I shall stand my full height for the things that mean what I mean."

"Well, what do you mean?" asked Andrews.

"I mean that I shall do what I can for the community in which I live; a voice calls me and I must follow it."

Poor Andrews did not understand that what his daughter said to him, from time to time, meant that all the whispering melodies of a strong nature were struggling in her soul.

But his perplexity was not of long duration. One day in the early spring, as he was driving a span of young horses down a steep grade, a strap gave way. The frightened team ran at a furious pace for some distance and then, making a sudden turn, threw Andrews violently against a tree. After a few short hours of suffering, his soul flitted away to the silent land, and they buried his body beyond the orchard beside his wife's.

Helen, so shocked and so broken that she lamented by day and by night, was now face to face with a new era. She had no relatives to come to her assistance, nor any friend to whom she could entrust the details of her father's business. Old Joe was her only dependence, but he was too lame to be of much service in the performance of manual labor. Trained by Mrs. Andrews, he had helped in the kitchen and served Helen through all the years of her girlhood, and now he seemed the only prop she had with which to hold the home together; but there was much more to be done than home-keeping.

Under the circumstances, it was inevitable that the affairs of the ranch should be thrown sadly out of order by the death of Andrews. The herders

were hired men, who lived, for the most part, upon the range, coming in for supplies, or gathering as occasion required for branding and driving stock. Helen knew but little of the details of their work, but understood that, without supervision, great waste would of necessity accrue.

In her distress, she took long, solitary rides, or sat, half-dead with fear and emotion until the Indian thought that she was settling into hopeless melancholy.

Her young neighbor, John Stanford, was untiring in his efforts on her behalf; but, owing to the great difference in their ideals, he never crossed the threshold of her world. There were times when she positively loathed the man; times when mercenary considerations seemed to make of him a very demon.

"Calves do very well on skimmed milk," he said to her one day when he had surprised her feeding the hungry little creatures on milk fresh from the cow.

"I have seen the poor little starvelings bleating continually for their mothers many a time, and I positively will not have it," she retorted.

Each day, as she had a more intimate acquaintance with the animals on the place, the non-killing conscience grew, until she refused to see butchers, and gave orders that no life should be taken within the boundaries of her land.

All this seemed to John Stanford an evidence of incapacity. On one occasion he asked her to decide about the harvest.

"Shall we cut the barley for hay, or wait until it is ripe and head it?"

Helen looked out over the field where one green billow followed another, as the breeze swept past, and replied:

"I shall leave it alone — it is beautiful — why not leave it as it is?"

Stanford gazed at her in despair.

"I'm afraid you're not suited for a farmer," he said. "Things on a ranch must be looked after at the right time or they go to waste."

"I know I am not practical," she answered, "but it seems to me that all questions are settled by you men with reference alone to their money value."

"What other way is there?" Stanford asked innocently.

"I will never conform to that rule," Helen replied coldly.

John Stanford was not distinguished for heroic conversation, but he drew himself up and said:

"You must rent the ranch. It takes a man to handle a place like this."

"Perhaps it does," Helen admitted. "Perhaps I ought to rent the ranch and go into town to live. Father thought I ought to study art — or — something. I am glad you thought of it."

John was not prepared for this ready acquiescence. In his heart of hearts, renting the ranch was the last thing he wanted her to do. It was a great pleasure for the young man to look upon himself as Helen's protector, and he wished to remain in that position. This day, however, she had



seemed to him inexcusably wilful, and he had let slip the suggestion before he realized where it might lead.

"It's not likely you can get anyone to take it," he said deprecatingly. "Responsible men don't go 'round renting; they usually own their own land. But really you must look more to the profits."

The idea of renting had struck Helen favorably, however.

"I mean to try it anyway," she said.

While they were talking, another neighbor, who had known her father for many years, was passing, and Helen stopped him to ask his opinion of the plan.

"Certainly, it's the best thing for you," said the old man, "and, if you like, I will try to send you a tenant."

Helen smiled an assent: "I really do not see any other way to get on," she declared.

"But you can't go wandering around in town the way you do here," Stanford remarked.

The girl drew herself up.

"Of course, I can," she answered. "I do not feel the need of any protector."

Seeing that the props and supports of his little kingdom were all going to pieces, Stanford, after loitering about for a time, called Maria, mounted his horse, and set out for home. It chanced that the two canine had gone higher up on the mesa to examine certain holes in which they were mutually interested, and, after riding half a mile, the young man came back after his dog.

He found Helen and Joe sitting on the veranda with a huge basket of chili peppers between them, which they were dexterously threading on strings. Every two yards or so they cut the cord, tied the ends, and hung the brilliant strand against the wall. They were chatting and laughing as they worked, and the scene was pretty to look upon. The young man could see that the confidence he would have been so glad to possess was bestowed freely upon the Indian. He saw that she felt no need to hide her feelings from her old servitor,—what pleased her, what puzzled her, what grieved her,—she told to him in childish confidence as they sat and worked together.

Stanford thought he had never seen Helen look so beautiful but he only faltered out:

“I came back for Maria —”

“Oh,” Helen responded, “they went off up the hill — she and Nero.”

“They get on together better than we do,” he said weakly.

“Oh, no. You must not think about our differences — they only amount to this — I seize upon the things that seem most important to me, and I suppose you do the same. The things that we value, however, are not the same things — are they?”

“Look how beautiful the peppers are! I see the color and the shadow on the wall. You see only peppers to eat; is it not so?”

More vexed than ever, he stared at her blankly, and, as Maria came up at the moment, he again mounted and rode away.

When it became known in the neighborhood that Helen Andrews intended to rent her ranch, she had a number of applications from would-be tenants, and it was not long before she hit upon one with whom she closed a bargain. A few days later, she rode Mandy over to the post-office at Serrano, and, chancing to see John Stanford, said to him:

"I have taken your advice and rented the ranch."

Stanford raised his yellow eyebrows almost to his yellow hair, and asked:

"Do you know anything about your tenant?"

"Only that his name is Burlingham, and that he has half a dozen poor little backwoods children, with poor little bare feet, and poor little drooping heads."

John Stanford was horrified.

"Where are they from?" he demanded.

"Oh, from Kansas."

"I hope it's all right," he said in a tone that pointed strongly to the opposite desire; "but sometimes these people who drag around from one frontier to another are not any too honest. You ought to consider such a move very carefully and consider —"

She interrupted him quickly. "I have thought twice. I have been through all the misery of it; but I think these people need a place, and I need them. It's a mutual arrangement. I am very grateful to you for your interest in my affairs — but — I must use my own judgment."

She spoke hurriedly, having a feeling that, somehow or other, the air was disagreeably charged with electricity.



"How soon does your tenant take possession?"

"Within a week," she answered, and stepping to the curb where Mandy was pawing uneasy to be off, she bade him good-bye.

As he watched the horse's flying heels, Stanford pondered over the precipitous methods of the girl. She had undoubtedly taken the reins in her own hands, and, without the slightest hesitation, was driving whithersoever she chose. It seemed to him that she needed a protector; yet he was conscious that, when left to herself, she came on very well. He could remember times when she had acted quite in opposition to his judgment, yet had shown herself capable. He wondered whether, after all, there was method in her madness, or whether some divine power took care of people who did not know how to take care of themselves. As long as he could see the dust of Mandy's feet, he looked after the fleeing girl, and then said to a young man standing beside him:

"Well, I'll be durned!"

Once out of sight of her would-be adviser, Helen fell into a state of exaltation. She believed that the danger signals raised by John Stanford were only reflections of his own narrow nature. She believed them to be the vagaries of the man who lives for gain.

Passing a field of tar-weed, she reached down from the saddle and picked a long, yellow spray, which she fastened in the bridle above Mandy's forehead; then sped on up the grade, all the while talking aloud to Mandy.

"These magnificent journeys of ours are coming

to an end, dear little friend. How many times we have raced over this road together, haven't we? And now I must go and leave you, but you know how to balk, don't you? If these new people put a Spanish bit in your mouth, you won't go, will you?"

When she reached the barn, she filled Mandy's manger to overflowing with hay and started toward the house; but the plaintive evening song of a whip-poor-will called her back toward the orchard. How still the landscape lay! All the turmoil of the world seemed shut out, and there was only the little gray bird discharging his battery of song at the great monotonous sky.

"No one knows what you mean by your call, sweet one, but it echoes in my heart and makes me know that of a truth you and I are creatures of the plains. But I am going to leave you, dear bird. Perhaps study and society have been undervalued by me. Perhaps I can never do much good — unless I live more with my own human kind."

As she paused, she chanced to look towards the old shack, and there she saw the Mexican, to whom she had given the eggs, lying prone across the path. She considered it her duty to do something for him and called Joe.

Joe did not calmly think out a plan for the salvation of the Mexican, but turned him over with his foot and saw that he was too stupid with drink to go on.

"Take him home," said Helen pleadingly. "I

will help you harness old Billy. If we hurry, you can get back before dark."

The Indian was not in a mood to enthuse over the matter, but obeyed, harnessing old Billy to a light wagon, and, by dint of kicks and physical exertion, he got the man in and drove off.

When he returned, Helen questioned him about the place and the little girl, and learning that it was a poor hut and that the child was very frightened and very miserable, she said:

"When I am gone will you look after her a little? She must need much done for her. Was there no woman about the place?"

"I saw none," said the Indian.

"Poor little Luisa," whispered Helen. "It makes my heart ache to think of her."

## CHAPTER VI

As no will had been found among Andrews' papers, Helen was dependent upon the lawyer, Mark Watkins, for much advice. As she came near to him in matters of business, his polished sentences did not convey to her mind the curious pleasure that they had when first she knew him. Sometimes she thought they might cover a multitude of sins. Old Joe seemed to be of the same opinion.

"When you get settled in town," he advised, "you must learn to look after your own business. Men may come any day with lies to steal away your land."

"Yes," returned Helen, "nothing is so well done as the things we do ourselves."

The Indian shrugged his shoulders. "It is the same — always the same that your mother would have said."

A hot tear came into Helen's eye. "Do you really think I shall ever be as competent as my mother was?" she asked.

The Indian made no reply, but began packing some of the things that were to be stored away before the Burlinghams took possession. There was much to be done in preparation for the change. A part of the house had been reserved by Helen for herself and her effects, and into this must be gath-

ered many of the articles that had belonged to her parents — things that were too precious in her eyes to be turned over to strangers. Old Joe was invaluable in this sort of work, and was never too tired to help in sorting, moving, and arranging.

All the week Helen and the Indian had worked together and had nearly finished their task when one morning John Stanford drove familiarly around to the kitchen door and knocked. Nero gave tongue and this brought Joe out upon the veranda.

“Good-morning,” he said to Stanford, and “good-morning” to Maria. Maria wagged her shaggy tail while her master took the chair offered him, and rather sullenly awaited the appearance of Helen. Instead of greeting him, as he expected the young woman to do, she went to the pantry for a pan of skimmed milk which she placed on the floor inviting the dogs to drink, and then she began sorting a box of old letters.

“I thought maybe you’d changed your mind by this time about renting the place,” Stanford began rather awkwardly. “These ‘back east’ folks don’t know very much about farming in California. The place will run down like the dickens, if you put that kind of man in charge.”

“He will surely manage it better than I am doing,” was her answer.

“I’ve been finding out things about him,” continued Stanford. “He’s a regular mover — that’s the kind of man he is. If me and you would stick together we could make a lot of money next year. Beef’s going to be high.”

Helen picked up the box of letters and rummaged deep to the bottom.

It took the young man a long time to realize that his arguments had not made the slightest impression upon the girl. His appeals to her interest, from a financial point of view, did not in the least succeed, and when he drew nearer and tried to touch her heart, she seemed to slip still farther away. If he cited the dangers of the city, the noise and the lack of space, it elicited no more than a passing smile; so, after an hour, he departed, leaving Helen and Joe to resume their work.

The great shelves of books that were heirlooms in the family were dusted and packed; such articles of clothing as they felt to be suitable for the newcomers were hung in the kitchen, and a package of toys was tied up for Luisa.

Joe understood that he was part and parcel of the premises that the Burlingham's had undertaken to use and return in good condition, and that his life was to go on as usual during Helen's absence, but he looked with fear upon the change. His Indian blood forbade him to complain but dark shadows crept across his forehead and into his coal black eyes.

It was late on Saturday when the Burlingham family arrived. Helen and the Indian watched the rickety old wagon, as it came squeaking past the Three Trees. High up on the spring seat sat the father, driving a span of horses so thin that a buzzard soared up and up above them. Trailing after the first wagon was an old goloshe-top buggy, in which



was seated Mrs. Burlingham, with a six-months-old baby in her lap, while beside her, dangling her bare feet over the box, a little girl chattered. Strung out over the road were other spindling boys and girls, one of whom led an old mule with a sore back.

At close range, Burlingham developed the stoop and the cough of the consumptive. In his face was pallor and patience, and long suffering. He stopped the horses at the back door, climbed down stiffly, and went around to the side of the buggy.

"Give me the baby, mother," he said cheerfully, "I guess you be tired."

"Yes," his wife replied petulantly, "I am glad to get to a place where we can stop." Then, calling to her eldest daughter: "Come, Mary Jane, come now and help unload."

"Have you come far?" Helen asked kindly, as she led the way into the kitchen.

"We have been camping down in the arroya for a spell back, but we're all the way from Kansas," answered Mrs. Burlingham.

"Well," laughed Helen, "then you are nearing the end of your journey, for you have almost reached the Pacific ocean."

"Yes, that's what I say. You see," she explained, "pap's got a cough—"

"Ah, it's climate that you are after," said Helen.

"Yes," Mrs. Burlingham responded wearily, "it's climate—we never git anything else. Sometimes pap looks for gold mines, but he never finds none."

"Well, never mind, mother," said her husband, "if you'll only be easy in your mind we'll be real

comfortable here." Then, looking towards the mountains, he added. "My! but this is a terrible nice view!"

His wife sat down in a rocking chair, with her back toward him, and began nursing the baby, her eyes traveling from one object to another. When she spoke again she said: "We never can keep warm with them fireplaces; we tried it back east."

Burlingham looked at her with a tenderness that was pathetic, then, turning to Helen, he said: "If you don't mind, I'll get mother something hot to drink."

He took off the stove lid and poked the embers together. "Here's fire," he said, and pulling the tea kettle forward, he hovered over a basket that contained cooking utensils.

"Which can's got the tea in? Way off, I can see as well's ever I did — but close — it seems as though everything is blurry. I got hold of the pepper t'other day, and was going to sp'ile something, but Mary Jane stopped me, Mary Jane did —"

His wife reached into the basket and brought out an old tin canister, which she handed him without a word.

"I've thought a good many times," the man resumed, "that there wasn't nothing in the world so good as a real nice cup of tea. 'Member the time Purdy stopped with us, how many times we looked at the groun's? He could tell what they meant, but I can't."



## CHAPTER VII

MANY years ago, on a well known street in Los Angeles, there was a boarding house called the "Buena Vista," a sweet Spanish name, meaning "good view." Why Mrs. Parker had chosen so fair a name for a place on the bottom lands, where there was no view at all, was a problem none could solve. It was whispered that the house had been built by an old Frenchman, without the slightest reference to the view; but with an eye single to a certain zanja, which carried forty inches of water when he stood over it with a shot-gun, and fell down to half that amount when he was absent; and that he had called the place "La Zarza," which meant "The Briar."

But the time came when the city water company owned and controlled the zanja, and the Frenchman, having lost his occupation, sold out to Mrs. Parker, who after making divers and sundry improvements, re-christened the house and opened the "Buena Vista" where once had been only "La Zarza."

Some wit had Mrs. Parker and some beauty and because she had seen better days, she was on terms of equality with certain society women whose company was supposed to be a salve for the "who's who" that arises wherever women congregate. Notwithstanding her social position Mrs. Parker was an industrious purveyor of news and, like the name on

her house, told little fibs, when they served her purpose better than the truth.

On a warm October morning, Helen Andrews, passing by the Buena Vista, saw a sign on the porch, which read, "Furnished rooms and board." Being in search of such accommodations, she tripped lightly up the steps and rang the bell, then turned about and looked at the nasturtiums that were climbing up a trellis of white string.

After a few moments the door was opened by a little woman, with clear blue eyes, who gazed into Helen's face as though it held a breath of fragrance for her.

"And what can I do for such a sweet young lass?" asked the maid.

"I am looking for rooms. Perhaps I ought to see the landlady —"

"Indade, I know it," the woman answered, still looking admiringly at Helen, "but there's plenty of rooms — an' — I want ye to stay."

Her Scotch-Irish accent had a ring of honesty in it that drew Helen's heart toward her. "Tell me your name," she said. "If I come here to live, we must be friends."

"My name is Margaret," the woman replied with a little nod, "I'm only the sarvant, — but I want you to stay." Then she hurried off to that part of the house where Mrs. Parker was most likely to be found.

When that lady reached the door, she seemed a little shocked to find a young woman seeking rooms for herself alone, and said, "You must tell me who

you are. We have to be a little careful whom we take."

Helen, who thought she was abundantly protected by her honesty of purpose, wondered if she ought not to sail loftily away. But Mrs. Parker, seeing the expression on her face, changed her demeanor and said:—

"Will you come in? I did not mean to question you."

"I am not prepared to offer credentials," returned Helen coldly, "I am from Serrano, and I am coming into town, in part to settle my father's estate, and in part to study art."

The word "estate" acted as oil on the troubled waters. Not many of her patrons were burdened with estates, and a young lady thus endowed in her house might be turned to advantage in more ways than one, so she said:

"Oh, just come right upstairs. I have several nice suites that are vacant."

As she led the way from room to room Helen felt some reluctance about remaining, but when they came to good north light she paid a month's rent in advance and went off to get her trunk.

When she returned, the room was swept and dusted and before night Helen had shaken the wrinkles out of her small wardrobe and was trying to accustom herself to the noises and footsteps of a new home. She was possessed with the idea that the air was bad, and that she could not see out,—even worse,—that there was an odor of uncleanness about the walls. But she was very tired, and pulling a rocking chair

to the window sat down to rest. Never before had she seen darkness creeping over the earth without reverent emotion. At dusk the great out of doors had always impressed her as an hour of solemn import, but here the distance was obscured and a medley of strange noises floated through the air.

She was aroused from her meditations by a rustling sound at her door, and asked a little timidly:

"Who is it?"

"It is only Mrs. Parker," came the reply.  
"May I come in?"

"Certainly," and Helen unlocked the door.

The landlady seated herself and began to chat in such a friendly way that Helen was almost ashamed of her loneliness and laughed gaily at the idea of sending out for ice-cream. It was a new experience to Helen to be able to order sweets at a moment's notice. At the ranch, ice-cream had been something to be accomplished only with great labor; but here it came apparently with no trouble at all. Over the repast, Mrs. Parker took the rôle of adviser, and Helen listened, as yet, too inexperienced to express an opinion. At last, however, Mrs. Parker said:

"It's a cruel, bad world, and we have to be very careful with whom we associate."

Helen's reticence gave way, and she replied: "I do not understand that at all. To me the world is beautiful, and all the people good."

"Such ideas may do in the country," admitted the landlady, "but in town there are certain women whose society I would advise you to cultivate and

certain others that you should avoid. You must let me take care of you — you really must.”

“Oh,” Helen exclaimed, “I am never afraid of people,—I get on very well with everyone.”

There was a mixture of innocence and mockery in her voice which annoyed Mrs. Parker, and she answered dryly.

“When you have lived in town longer, you will see that I am right.”

The conversation continued for an hour, leaving in Helen’s mind the idea that Mrs. Parker was making furtive attempts at respectability. Even after she went to bed she had the impression that narrowness and pretentiousness cast a withering influence over the house.

The next day Mrs. Parker introduced Helen to the other ladies, explaining, as she did so, that Miss Andrews was in town for the purpose of settling up her estate, with so much stress laid upon the one word that the girl, on going to her own room, reflected quite seriously upon her own lack of discretion in mentioning it.

The wholesome honesty of Margaret was to her the most charming thing in the house, and there sprang up between the two a warm friendship, but this seemed to Mrs. Parker a setting aside of all the conventional notions of social intercourse.

Thus things went on for a time when, one day, Mrs. Parker invited Helen to a “little informal tea,” to be given under the orange trees.

“You will come, won’t you?” she urged.

“With great pleasure,” answered Helen, “I take



my drawing lesson at 1 o'clock, and after that I shall be at liberty."

When the time came to dress she felt a little misgiving lest her simple blue lawn should not be suited to the occasion.

"I do look so countrified," she said to Margaret, who had come to her room on an errand.

"You will look better than any of them," asserted Margaret admiringly. "The women that trail silk dresses over the floor have nothing but their clothes."

Helen laughed and ran lightly down the stairs.

She found the parlor full of beautifully dressed women and felt greatly embarrassed; but she listened to the conversation with the expectation of hearing interesting themes discussed. To her surprise, however, she only heard Mrs. Maynard telling Mrs. Whitney about her new cook — who, she said, gave her "the fidgets."

Then followed a little talk about the weather, and Helen drifted within hearing of another group.

"I met John Carr this morning, and he told me that he was engaged to Violet Church! What do you think of that?" one lady said to another.

"I think some board of examiners ought to clap him into a lunatic asylum," was the reply.

Another group was discussing their club, and it was whispered, with an air of mystery, that Mrs. Jones had been blackballed and that Mrs. Stimson dare not apply for membership, lest she also should go out under the cloud of rejection.

Helen felt that a train of trifles was being poured into her ears that might just as well be left unsaid.

The deference paid to money; the pitiful attempts at youthfulness; the merciless scrutiny of each other made Helen wonder if, after all, women were not fated to carry along forever the curse of frivolity. She went back to her room quite dejected and some hours later, when Mrs. Parker called, she had almost made up her mind to go back to the ranch and stay there.

Mrs. Parker was astonished to find that this young country girl, in a blue lawn dress, who had been received at her tea with tolerable cordiality, did not in the least appreciate what had been done for her. Hoping that she might explain herself, she inquired what it was that had offended Helen.

"I am not offended," Helen replied, "but what is it all worth — this show of appearances."

"Tell me what you mean," said Mrs. Parker.

"I mean that I watched and waited for that sacred thing called friendship — that thing which is made for people who love one another."

"Do you mean the society of men?" Mrs. Parker, thoroughly mystified, inquired.

"Yes; I mean the society of both men and women who have a personality."

"I am afraid I don't in the least understand what you mean?"

"Well," explained the girl, "the ladies at your party seemed to me to have no more character than is found behind the great, brown eyes of a heifer. If I could paint what is in my heart, I should put anarchism on canvas, in the form of a strong female figure, tearing to pieces the foolish social system."



“You must get over your passion for reforming the world,” said Mrs. Parker. “The only excuse I can think of for you is that you have lived in the country so much of your life. When you are better acquainted with our ways, you will see differently. You must learn to conform to social usage.”

“No,” replied Helen. “I shall not conform; I have an idea that each individual is of value to the world only as he throws off the burden of appearing — and lives honestly. If I can find a place where my services are needed there shall I stay, with no regard whatever for society.”

## CHAPTER VIII

IN her loneliness at the Buena Vista, Helen came very near to Mark Watkins, who called from time to time on business. He spoke more to Helen's understanding than did the women with whom she came in contact. It was whispered downstairs that he drank, and that he was guilty of other great sins, the older and more conservative of the ladies embarking on recitals of his guilt and predicting that his visits to Helen would give occasion to the enemy in the form of "Oh, how dreadful!" and "I told you so." But Helen paid no attention to their criticisms, and as the days slipped by received his visits more and more frequently.

There was no week in which Mr. Watkins did not call upon his client, and no time when he was not welcome. Sometimes Helen felt a great difference between his ideals and hers, but whenever he came she was fed with intellectual manna. From classical poetry to the latest discovery in physics he was ever ready to quote. Descriptions of life at Harvard, where Mr. Watkins had graduated, filled her with delight.

"You must tell me," she said one day when he called, "what that curious and impassible gulf is that lies between us and the people from 'back

east.' I suppose the word 'tenderfoot' has a meaning, but I have never been quite able to discover it."

"Yes," said he laughing. "Like most western slang, it has a decided significance. It is an apt way of saying that the newcomer is a prig. Even the Harvard graduate when he comes here deals out formulas of the New England schoolnarm to an audience of cow boys who know more than he does. The shepherd who lives alone with his sheep is, at least, an original thinker, and has a case against the man who lectures him about culture. The poor tenderfoot may be polite and well educated, but his very virtues stand in the way of our loving him."

"But he becomes the Westerner in time, does he not?" asked Helen.

"Yes,—but it takes time. For years he goes about in the spirit of a Sunday school teacher who is never quite happy unless he is moralizing. It makes one feel instinctively that he is suppressing evidence against himself; most people who talk so good do so because they themselves are so bad."

"How clearly you have explained a problem that I never could have understood. I knew that the cowboys refused to make friends with the newly arrived; but the reason was always a puzzle to me."

"It is because we live out-of-doors. In the history of the world, the voice with a message to deliver has come from the wilderness. Culture is sure to be nonplussed when confronted by the actual. Boston reckoned without her host when she left out the great west.

"It almost makes me wonder whether culture is good for people," Helen interjected.

"If we use the word as it is understood in ultra-respectable society, I should say it is not. From examination of a large number of cases, it seems to me a contagion suited to the docile mind."

Helen laughed outright. "Then you and I are in no danger of catching the disease, are we?"

But there came a day when Helen's courageous attitude toward Mr. Watkins received a severe shock. One afternoon he called and, finding no one in the parlor, passed through the hall and went directly to Helen's studio, where he found her rubbing cobalt-blue into a sky that she was painting.

"How good of you to come," was her greeting; "I am in trouble with this sky. It has nowhere near the fleecy look that I want."

"Why don't you paint yourself, Miss Andrews?" he asked, "you ought to be in love with your own face."

Helen paid no attention to this foolish sally, but rubbed some black into her color, thus turning it to ivory gray, and, holding her palette-knife against the light, she cried:—

"Oh, it was too blue!"

But he refused to look, and, after a few cursory remarks about business affairs, began in his easy, flowing language, to talk of his own private life. As he came a little nearer to the girl, she saw that he had been drinking. His eye was bold and his breath fetid, and, taking him all in all, he had something the appearance of a beast.

"I must not criticise womankind," he began, "but the whole foolish show of society is driving the higher morality out of men's lives."

Helen took her brush and began rubbing the pearl gray into her sky.

"You are not interested, little one," he went on, "but I say it again. Women are destroying the higher morality of men. They are not companionable. They are not logical."

"How can they be logical?" returned Helen. "It is the men who do everything, and, of course, it is they who learn to reason."

"I do not mean the logic of business affairs; I mean the logic that makes homes," he replied incoherently. "Men want comradeship from women, not the show of appearances. I am going to tell you, Helen,—I have had high ideals—perhaps higher than most men,—but I am giving them up."

"Oh," Helen said, "I suppose you get tired of going like a horse in a mill and need a change. Is that what you mean?"

"No; worse than that. May I tell you? I feel like confessing my sins to-day—"

"Trifling sins, I am sure they are," said Helen, a little alarmed. "The people in the community respect you."

"Perhaps they do not know—perhaps a man may build himself a hell and live in it, and still go on tolerably well before the public." His tone was bitter.

"You are not calm, to-day, Mr. Watkins. Something has happened to throw you out of your pace."

"How can a man be calm who has to do with all kinds of folly and wickedness? As malice breeds malice and as serpent engenders serpent, so does the practice of law engender sin."

"Let us not think about it," Helen spoke soothingly, and, taking up a little study of still water, with a mountain peak reflected in its green depths, she asked him to criticise it.

"It is San Antonio," he said. "You cannot see it from here,—this 'Buena Vista' is like all the rest — a mere pretense."

Helen laughed. "I do not need to see it. It is always in sight from the ranch and it is graven on my heart. It beckons me. I know every crag and cañon of it."

"You confirm what I told you the other day about the tenderfoot," he replied. "You are a thousand times more of an artist than those who study in schools. The joy of the hills is in your work."

"No; not always. Look at this,—it is my latest and yet — the sky looks like wool! I have scraped it and done it over — but — it is not right."

"Yours is only a picture that will not come right — mine is myself. You have a desire to handle color — I have a desire to handle myself — and I cannot do it."

As he finished speaking, a look of demoniacal strength came into his eye and his broad, sensual shoulders shrugged forward as Helen had never seen them do before. His whole aspect frightened her. Intuition, which protects the pure and the good,



told her that this interview had lasted long enough. She turned toward the door, and, had she not seen Margaret approaching, she would have fled.

After he had gone, Helen whispered to Margaret that she had a little fear of Mr. Watkins, especially when he had been drinking.

Margaret's Scotch-Irish temper rose to a frightful pitch,—“I have always said—and I say it again—that when a man insults me, I will shoot him!” said Margaret.

“Oh Margaret!” Helen answered faintly. “How I wish you had not such a temper!”

She did not mention Mr. Watkins' call to Mrs. Parker, but remained alone and miserable in her room; and at a very early hour crept into bed, where she lay with a medley of thoughts storming through her brain. There seemed to be a hot breath upon her face and a whining in her ears. Once she fancied that she heard the hoofs of Mandy Jones flying past the window, and before midnight, she had a fever, and rose and tied a towel about her forehead. There were still wagons passing in the street and a light burning in the hall; but she felt afraid, and, running back to her bed, drew the blankets over her head.

When she finally fell asleep, she dreamed of the gnarled old cypress near the graves of her parents and of the cross made by the sycamores, and awoke in the morning with a conviction that Fate meant her to return to the ranch.

“I really am homesick,” she said to Mrs. Parker.



“I think I must stop work for awhile and go back to the ranch.”

Mrs. Parker assured her that it was only a little bilious attack and brought her a cup of savory herb tea to drink. But Helen declined it, saying —

“I am hungry for the country. I believe I can paint better out of doors. Perhaps, after all, Nature is the greatest teacher we can have.”

## CHAPTER IX

It was Sunday morning when Helen reached home and the ranch had an air of inactivity suited to the day. The Burlingham children had gone to the school house, two miles away, to recite a verse from the Bible, Burlingham sat tipped back on the veranda, stiff and uncomfortable in a shiny black coat, while Mrs. Burlingham was fuming about the kitchen.

As Helen had walked from the station, past the graves and through the orchard, she came up to the back-door unobserved, and, without any intention of listening, heard Mrs. Burlingham saying to her liege lord and master:—

“I reckon you’ll live through it—if you don’t go! If we’d been here forty or fifty years and heard all this talk about the river changing its bed, you might testify; but, being as we are newcomers and got no int’rest either way, I think you’d better keep still.”

“I can’t keep still if they s’peeney me,” Burlingham protested helplessly.

“Yes you can. Plenty of people don’t go when their s’peenied. I wouldn’t, not if all the courts in the country done it.”

Burlingham made no attempt at reply but drum-

med nervously on the floor with an orange wood stick that he had whittled into a cane. The conversation caused a little ripple of uneasiness in Helen's mind but she was of a trusting nature, and when the hound sprang forward and whined about her feet she forgot the episode and frolicked so noisily that it brought Mrs. Burlingham to the door.

"Hello!" she exclaimed with doubtful cordiality. "Where in the world did you 'light from?"

"Oh, I just got homesick," Helen answered; "I've been thinking so much lately about the place that I couldn't stay away any longer. I wanted to see old Joe and the graves, and Nero. Is everything going on well?"

"Oh, yes,—praise the Lord!" returned Mrs. Burlingham, her piety suddenly coming to the surface and giving her a sort of "blotting out of sins" expression. "The Lord cares for his own. The climate seems to agree well enough with pap. There ain't any storms to speak of, and we always have a little ahead."

"And Joe,—how is he?" Helen asked anxiously, after looking about for the Indian.

"He's well enough, I reckon. He don't stay here so reg'lar as he did. I can't for the life of me see what good he does — pottering around."

"Oh," Helen cried in alarm, "where does he go? He has no home but this?"

"I don't pay much attention to such folks — but the children say he camps down under the Three Trees."

They were interrupted by Mary Jane, who came

bounding in at the door, her shoes tied together over her arm, and her hat pushed to the back of her neck.

"Ma," she shouted, "I said every bit of my verse without a mistake!"

Burlingham looked at his daughter with pride and affection.

"Mary Jane's going to be a scholar,— Mary Jane is! She learns so easy."

"Well, why don't you speak to Miss Andrews," interrupted the mother. Mary Jane began to chew the string of her hat.

Helen's strong arm felt like reaching out to the awkward girl and dragging her up to a higher level.

"It is a more hopeful field for missionary work than society at Buena Vista," she said to herself as she saw Mary Jane put on a gingham apron and begin to help her mother with the cooking.

The rooms that Helen had reserved for herself opened upon the wide veranda, which rambled about three sides of the old adobe house. It was here, more than within doors, that the greater part of her life had been spent. Here old Joe had poured myth after myth into her receptive ears, and her father and mother had held her in loving embrace. As she unlocked the door and threw open the window, she seemed to hear their voices and to see their jubilant faces.

But the absence of old Joe worried her, and, going back to the kitchen, she inquired of the children concerning him.

"He is down by the Three Trees. We saw him

as we came home from Sunday school," said Mary Jane.

Helen put on her sunbonnet and went out into the narrow trail that led down to the sycamores.

She found the Indian, sitting on the ground, near a rude, improvised shelter. "Come back to the house with me," she said. "It is not home without you."

Joe uttered no word, but Helen could see, as he painfully arose and followed her, that great sorrow had come upon him during her absence. When they reached the veranda, he took his seat beside her door and slowly a look of peace settled on his worn features.

"See," said Helen, pointing to the great red olla. "It is neglected and dry."

"Yes," answered Joe. "The cool drip of the water makes good music."

He took the olla down and filled it at the pump; then after hanging it back on the hook, repeated, "The drip-drip-drip and the presence of those we love."

That night the stillness wrapped Helen close and she slept sweetly. In the morning, donning an old dress and heavy boots, she set out to look about the place. It was delightful to her to see the cow chewing the cud and the proud young Minorca rooster, with his white ears, strutting about the yard.

"I have come back to you, and you, and you, little pigs," she said, pointing delightedly to each.

But when she went a little further afield and

found Billy Burlingham trying to plow, with Mandy Jones hitched beside a heavy old work horse, she realized that her missionary labors must begin at once. It was a pathetic sight to see Billy, with the lines tied behind his back, jerking and whipping the poor little bronco and trying to hold her steady against the lumbering beast at her side. Both horses were worried and neither doing credit to the hour. The dumb knowledge of her degradation was written in every line of Mandy's body. The mysterious curse that lies upon the enslaved, seemed to have struck at her and demanded more than she could give.

"Mandy's no good," said Billy as Helen came within speaking distance. "If I had another horse as good as mine, I'd make things hum — you bet I would!"

"Poor Mandy," returned Helen, laying a caressing hand on the bronco, "she belongs to an era when nobody plowed — an age when the herder rode wild and reckless over the range."

"I've heard tell of them cow-boys and their broncos; but back east, where I come from, they didn't have no such stock."

A little flash came into Helen's eye, and she said: "There are plenty of other horses on the ranch. Can't you break one more suited to your work?"

"Break one. No," retorted Billy, "that takes time — and I hain't got no time!"

Helen saw the hopelessness of arguing with him, — saw that in the nature of things this raw boy from back east could not understand what she meant,



so she stepped up to the traces, unhooked them, and led Mandy toward the barn.

Billy was amazed. He watched until they were out of sight with some hope that Mandy would kick or run away, then he unhitched the old horse, turned him into the pasture, and went around to the side of the house where he was most likely to find his father. There he gave a low whistle — a secret signal between himself and his parent — which meant that there was something to communicate, not intended for his mother's ear. Burlingham heard and understood and met his son under a lemon tree near the kitchen-door.

"See here, pap," Billy began, "if that girl's going to run this ranch, we might as well move on again. I won't have no woman telling me what to do — not by a long shot. I'll —"

The conversation was broken off by Mrs. Burlingham's throwing a panful of dish-water dangerously near them. They moved out of range, and Billy went on,—

"I'll leave. I've stood a lot of things in my life, but I won't let no woman boss me."

"Well, I don't know as I'd say that, Billy. You know how it is with women — they don't mean nothing. I used to think they did, but late years I've give it up. You see — you have to git used to them," his father said pacifically.

Billy was still unreconciled. He argued for a little while, then walked wrathfully toward the kitchen, leaving his father much worried. Burlingham did not know whether to continue the subject



or not. He had great faith in his wife's ability — either to quell a riot or to incite one — but he could not feel sure how she might act if told what had happened in the field. For an hour he hung about with a dull prescience of trouble in his face; but at last Billy went out, and he said:

“Ma, we’ll kind of have to watch Billy. I’m afraid he’ll sass Helen when she comes back. He’s awful mad!”

“Go along, you old gump,” answered his wife, sweeping the crumbs from under the table at him. “You’re always imagining things.”

At this Mary Jane, who chanced to stand near, drew her father’s hand toward her in mute recognition of his weakness. “You’re just the sweetest, old pap,” she whispered.

“What’s the matter, anyway,” asked Mrs. Burlingham, relenting a little. “If there’s any trouble, I guess Billy can take care of himself!”

“It’s about that little bronco of her’n. She won’t let Billy use it,” said Burlingham, greatly relieved at being unloaded of his secret.

“There ain’t no time to be throwed away in that kind of a fuss,” firmly asserted Mrs. Burlingham. “If Billy can’t plow with Mandy, he can take some other horse. There’s plenty of them in the field.”

This wise decision was like light in a dark place. It relieved the tension all round; but ended in Billy having a good cry. First, he cried because he was angry; second, because he thought himself abused, and, third, because he was ashamed of himself.

Burlingham had hardly reckoned on so much docility from his son. There were not many connected links in the boy's thinking and, generally, when he was angry, no amount of persuasion could soothe him. But this time he assented readily enough to his father's suggestion that they take the old horse and go over to Joe Baker's.

"You're tired, Billy. Just let's stop and take a ride," his father said.

Before they started, Burlingham went back to the kitchen and whispered in his wife's ear: "It appears to me that the trouble is over for this time. But if Helen gets Billy's temper up again, there's no knowing what'll happen."

All this storm had blown over before Helen returned from her walk, and she was quite unconscious of the tempest she had caused. Her falling out with Billy Burlingham, however, was soon neighborhood gossip. He told it to Joe Baker's boys. They told it to the butcher on his rounds and Smith's folks, as they drove past, stopped at John Stanford's to repeat it, adding by way of inquiry,

"That girl's not very easy to get along with, anyway?"

This innuendo John denied with so much earnestness that the Smiths winked knowingly at each other and winked again when he asked if Helen had come home to stay.

"I haven't been up there," Smith replied, "but some of the school children told Jones's that she was back on the ranch, all right."

After the Smiths had gone on, "Doc." Stoner

burst in with the information that Helen had tired of the city and was back on the ranch.

"I was up there to see about borrowing a plow and it's inspiring the way she's straightening things out. But she'll have a picnic, if she tries to boss Billy. Old Burlingham is sickly, you know, and Billy takes after his mother."

"Did they say anything about the row?" Stanford asked with concern in his voice.

"Yes. Billy said she had a hell of a temper."

"Well, Billy — he lied!" responded Stanford promptly.

"Well, you had better go up there and see if she needs you. If I had a girl, I would take care of her!"

After "Doc." Stoner had gone, John Stanford fell into a state of activity quite unusual. He led his best saddle horse out of the barn and, with curry comb and brush, began taking the cockle burrs from its mane and tail. Tangle after tangle was so matted together that nothing short of cutting the hair would allow the comb to pass through; but when at last, he adjusted the saddle and bridle and led the horse out to the hitching-post, it looked like another animal.

To no one did he confide the flattering hopes that prompted him to do all this: to no one did he give a hint of the new joy that lighted up his countenance, but in his heart it seemed almost prophetic that Helen should have had a misunderstanding with Billy at the very outset of her coming home. It began to look as though she really needed help.

And he needed a wife — a wife to cook and sweep and feed the chickens. He saw no reason why they should not join hands and together make a reasonably comfortable life-voyage of it. He admitted to himself that Helen might have eccentricities, which he should be obliged to root out; but as he was entirely sure of the superiority of the masculine mind, he had no doubt that he could bring her around to his ways. Once or twice it occurred to him that the advances already made in that direction had not thriven as well as he could wish; but perhaps love was a plant needing much cultivation; perhaps it must be hoed and raked and watered with more patience.

The sound of his horse's hoofs on the hard ground was music in his ears. As he struck the trail half a mile below the Three Trees he let a coyote go without shooting at it, an act quite unlike the John Stanford of every day. When nearing Helen's home he became conscious that his collar was not in the best of condition, and wondered why the great bank of fog which usually drifts landward in the afternoon had not come to cool the air. As he came near the house he took out a handkerchief and wiped the perspiration from his neck; then rode boldly up to the gate.

Helen saw him and arose to meet him.

"Well, Mr. Stanford, it seems like old times to see you," she said. "I supposed you had forgotten all about me by this time."

"There ain't no danger of my forgetting about you," he replied so significantly that Helen saw at

once she was trenching on dangerous ground and hastened to change the subject. She did not analyze his symptoms, as one accustomed to the malady of love might have done; but she led him to the side of the veranda where Mary Jane was sitting and began to talk about the weather.

John glared at her suspiciously, all the tangled facts and fancies in his brain crying out against this action. As he took his seat on the bench, Mrs. Burlingham appeared on the scene with a pan of water for the chickens.

"'Pears to me," she was saying, "that the chickens drink all the time this weather. 'Pears to me —" she broke off abruptly and reached out her unemployed hand.

"Why, Mr. Stanford, I didn't know you was here! How do you do."

"How do you do," stammered the man. "I heard from some of the neighbors that you was ailing."

"Oh, I'm middling. Some days I'm plum give out, and then agin, I git 'round right smart."

Just then Burlingham wriggled his skinny hand in between them and said, "Shake! and then come into the house. It's awful hot out here. I've heard of folks being took down with the heat and having trouble with their brains."

"There ain't no danger of your having trouble that way," interrupted his better-half.

"Pap's all right," interposed Mary Jane, with wonderful comprehension of the situation, "ain't you, dear old pap?"



Burlington's pale face lighted up at his daughter's affectionate defense and he said gratefully:—

"She's got an awful big heart, Mary Jane has," and as Mrs. Burlingham passed beyond hearing, he continued, "she'll make a good wife for some man, Mary Jane will!"

John Stanford was not in a mood to turn his thoughts to Mary Jane, but as the whole party accepted Burlingham's invitation to move into the house, he joined them and entered upon the topics of conversation that arose.

"How's your alfalfa?" inquired Burlingham with neighborly interest, to which Stanford answered stiffly:

"Oh, it's all right. Of course we can conjure up a lot of trouble about gophers and such like, but I'm not one of the worrying kind!"

"I'm not much used to alfalfa," said Burlingham; "we raised mostly corn back in Kansas."

"We never raised nothing," put in his wife deprecatingly. "We never staid in one place long enough."

Then Billy complained about the climate, and Mrs. Burlingham rehearsed her ailments, and it was nine o'clock when Stanford, having had no opportunity to come anywhere near the object of his visit, went out to the stable for his horse. He felt it a dreary thing to ride home without having said a word of what he intended to Helen, especially as the idea lodged itself in his brain that she was trying to keep the Burlinghams between herself and him.

He thought he had never known the road so long

or the howling of the coyotes so weird and mournful. As he passed his orchard he saw that the cow had pulled up her stake and was hooking some young trees. This added to his annoyance. He got off his horse, roughly caught the dangling rope and jerked the poor beast up to the corral fence, nearly upsetting a hen that was brooding over a dozen newly-hatched chickens.

“That’s right,” he snarled, “now kill a chicken and I’ll smash your head fer you.”



## CHAPTER X

HELEN had not been many days at home before she realized that there was a great accumulation of little nothings to be done on the ranch. Especially were the children in need of oversight as they went tearing about the place carrying with them parts of harness, rakes, plow-shares and in fact anything that they could utilize in their play. Mrs. Burlingham was too much occupied with rehearsing her ailments to give much heed to the wasteful habits of her offspring. She preferred quoting passages of scripture which seemed always to be at her tongue's end.

"There'll be wailing and gnashing of teeth," she said one day, as Helen went into the kitchen to render some kindly assistance.

"It's too bad," replied the young lady, "to think such dreadful thoughts."

But Mrs. Burlingham continued, "I suppose there is such a thing as forgiveness of sins, but I believe in retribution. It looks reasonable."

For the moment Helen's patience threatened to give way, but she soon concluded that Mrs. Burlingham and the children had claims upon her to which she must respond. The result was that instead of long rides and hours of sketching, there were days at a time when the eternal grind of things seemed

to lay hold upon her and compel her whithersoever it pleased. Sometimes she looked wearily upon her self-imposed task, sometimes her great desire to paint seemed to call her back to nature. She had not come far enough along in art to understand that Mrs. Burlingham frying bacon, and the children racing across the floor on all-fours were paintable, else she might have posed them in groups and continued her studies, or she might have modeled a relief of the butter that she always had to work over after Mrs. Burlingham's untidy hands. As neither of these things occurred to her she continued to labor where she seemed most needed.

Nor were her operations confined to the house. Teaching Mary Jane how to cook frijoles one hour was followed the next by helping Billy break a colt, or by holding down a calf's head while it learned to drink. Old Joe who had always been about to assist at such work now absented himself for days at a time, seeking food after his own fashion or lying on his back visible or invisible in the mustard. Occasionally the Indian came back and gathered up the scattered tools or sat for a time on the veranda, but at a hint from Mrs. Burlingham he disappeared again. These worries Helen faced by turns, laughing and crying, until one day something more serious came to occupy her thoughts.

Two men drove up to the gate and, after shaking the dust from their clothing, walked with a business-like air to the veranda and inquired for Miss Andrews.

Mrs. Burlingham dragged out a couple of chairs

and invited them to be seated, at the same time saying:

"She went over to Serrano to get the mail. But she'll be back soon. She rode the bronco, and it goes right smart."

Mark Watkins took a chair, while his friend, Hank Austin, sat somewhat awkwardly upon the bench, from beneath which Nero looked out with sharp, suspicious eyes.

"You ain't going back right away, be ye?" inquired Mrs. Burlingham.

"No," replied the lawyer, "we must wait for Miss Andrews."

"You better put your horse in the barn, then, and feed him," she suggested, "for I reckon you've come all the way from Los Angeles."

"Yes, we have had a long and dusty drive," Mr. Watkins responded.

"The men folks are in the field, but I reckon you can find the way to the barn. There's plenty of feed there."

Mr. Watkins acted upon her invitation and started down the path, requesting his companion to bring the horse.

As a professional witness, purveyor of documents, and as a detective, Mr. Austin had had many years' experience, and could, if the court permitted, combine all of these offices and become at once the individual upon whom the fate of a law-suit depended.

"You know what kind of testimony I want in this case," Mr. Watkins said, as the man drove up,

"and you may as well make up your mind to camp right here until you get it."

"Yes," Austin returned, "I've been here before — when Andrews was alive. Do you remember? He testified in the O'Donnell case."

"Yes. But that was different. The title to the whole of this young woman's property is involved and I am personally interested. The estate is in probate and never can be settled until the cloud is off the title."

"Yes, I know; yes, I know," Austin repeated as he unhitched the horse, hung the harness on a peg, and measured out a couple of quarts of barley for the tired animal.

From behind the curtain of the pantry window, Mrs. Burlingham and Mary Jane watched the strangers with keen interest.

"I'll bet you," Mrs. Burlingham confided to her daughter, "them's lawyers! We never had nothing, so we never knowed many; but I just bet them's lawyers."

When the two men had returned and seated themselves again upon the veranda, Mrs. Burlingham resigned her office as cook to Mary Jane, and, dragging another chair out, sat down to entertain her guests with the news of the neighborhood.

"We're having a right smart camp-meeting over to Gospel Swamp. If you could just hear the singing and the praying, it would do you good."

"I dare say it would," Mark Watkins returned with a twinkle in his eye. "Austin here needs it."

"They're Methodists," the good woman continued, "and I'm a Presbyterian. But still, when I can't get to a Presbyterian meeting-house, I can go to most any kind — though I do hold to the idea of total depravity."

Austin, whose business it was to gather testimony, saw at once that it was his cue to go with Mrs. Burlingham to the camp-meeting, and there, with great saving of time and labor, interview the country people about the matter he had in hand. So he expressed interest and a desire to attend, which greatly pleased Mrs. Burlingham.

"Yes, it'll do you good. 'Back east' we lived close to a meeting-house and we went to meetings all the time; but since we came to Californy, it 'pears that there ain't nothing the same way as it was there."

Here the two men fell into a discussion involving terms, which were quite incomprehensible to Mrs. Burlingham, and that pious lady went back to the kitchen. As Mary Jane resigned the dish-cloth to her mother, she inquired,

"Be they?"

"Yes, just what I said, lawyers, and it does 'pear to me that all lawyers is rascals!" concluded Mrs. Burlingham suspiciously.

When Helen arrived, she was both surprised and embarrassed at seeing her visitors. Her last interview with Mark Watkins rose painfully in her mind and she lost her readiness of speech, but as the situation was one that did not offer opportunity for more than a short prelude, Mark

Watkins went straight to the business of the hour.

"I have come to explain to you, Miss Andrews, a matter which you must understand and think about and not be surprised at, no matter what happens. I do not wish to alarm you; but it is my duty as your attorney to state an important matter of business to you."

He waited a moment and then added,

"There is a little trouble about the title to your property. The change in the river-bed raises questions that are difficult to settle: as your legal adviser you must command me, you must tell me what to do."

"I am afraid my judgment would be very poor, especially if the business is in the nature of a lawsuit," Helen replied, all the hints and innuendoes of the Burlinghams coming to her mind.

"Sometimes a child knows as well as the best of us what to do," Mr. Watkins replied.

His bearing was respectful, and his words were kind.

"You must tell me more about it before we can come to an understanding," Helen said.

"Yes," he returned, "you must let me tell you. It is only when we understand one another that we can work together."

Here he drew nearer to Miss Andrews and proceeded.

"A suit has been instituted by Don Juan Alvarado against you and others, to quiet title to all the lands between the river, as it now lies a mile south of its former bed, and the north line of the



Santa Gertrudis Rancho. Alvarado's Mexican grant describes the land conveyed to him as being bounded on the south by the San Gabriel river, and it now becomes a vital question to determine where the river was located forty years ago, when the grant was made. These mountain streams are shifting, you know. They drop sand during wet seasons until their beds are higher than the surface of the surrounding country, then turn out, seeking lower ground. As there are no maps or records that can be used in such cases, it resolves itself into a question of testimony; and, in order to procure this, every nook and corner of the country must be searched."

"I see," said Helen, very calmly, "this is what my father feared at the time. He said it would affect the title to all the land lying south of Don Alvarado's grant line."

"Yes. Anyone who lives between the ranch of Don Alvarado and the river has a cloud upon his title. Until the record can be made to show where the river was when the grant was made we are all in the dark."

"I see," Helen repeated, "but what can I do? How can I help in the case?"

"I will leave my horse and buggy and between you and Mr. Austin you must visit every shack for twenty miles about. Old letters or papers are valuable, and all persons who can remember forty years back must be interviewed. Austin has had plenty of experience; he knows testimony when he finds it; but he needs help. These fat, suspicious farm-

ers shut up like clams when they think they are needed as witnesses. It will be your duty to make them talk. You must break the way, and then let Austin make use of such facts as he thinks best. It is not an easy thing to do. It has happened more than once that a good case has failed because the neighbors were not willing to testify. Much litigation over Spanish titles has made the country people wary. It is this that we have to overcome. Do you understand, Miss Andrews?"

"I understand," she returned, "but will not all this cause a neighborhood feud, that may last for years?"

"Unfortunately, we have had many quarrels over boundary lines."

"Is there no way to settle such difficulties amicably?" Helen inquired. "Securing testimony that will set neighbor against neighbor is not pleasant work."

"It is the only way that we know of. When our property is attacked we must defend ourselves as best we can."

It was a painful moment for Helen. She saw that the part she was to play must be great or small as she willed it, and she stood firm to her point. Mr. Watkins understood but little of her scruples; but some insight into her character dawned upon him and he said gently:—

"Do not let this trouble worry you, Miss Andrews. It is not hopeless, but you must learn to deal with facts as they are. All who take a hand in the turmoil of life are compelled to learn the art of resist-

ance. Non-resistance is the ideal; resistance is the actual. Neither youth nor old age, neither houses nor lands, move the destroyer to spare when he is minded to strike, and to fight back is our only hope."

His combining of sacred metaphors with schemes for outwitting the country people moved Helen strongly; her lips quivered, and she looked at him, as though his way of putting the case made it hideous. Mr. Watkins saw that she was wounded — saw the nervous twitching of her face as she tried to answer him and said:

"Wait a little before you speak; wait a little. This hurts me more than it does you."

Then, for a moment, the mills of the gods ceased to grind. Something rose in a flash and caused his heart to swell with honorable emotion. As he looked down into the girlish face, he felt as never before the glory of her deep-set eyes, the breadth of her forehead, the unconscious poise of her body.

When he began to speak again, he seemed to care little what he said, so long as he eased in some degree the pain and anxiety that he had caused. It was fortunate for him that the train for the city was due at three o'clock and that it was now half-past two; for he felt that every moment was bringing him to a critical moment in his life. He called Austin and asked that he walk with him to the station. As he said good-bye to Helen he took her hand, and, in an ecstasy of love, whispered:

"Put me in your prayers, now and then, little

one! I think I need your help more than you need mine."

Then, taking his companion by the arm, the two men took the trail that led across the field to the little railway station. It was not until the chaparral hid the house from view that the mills of the gods again began to grind. Not until they were well out of sight of Helen, who stood upon the veranda watching, did Mark Watkins begin to discuss again the business that had brought him there. But finally the difficulties and uncertainties of the case brought back to him the lurid glare of his genius, and he began to talk plainly of the means by which testimony could be procured.

"If any man has an itching palm," he said to Mr. Austin, "you must anoint it. If any man's testimony is dangerous, you must stop his mouth, if need be, with money.

"There is another thing to be borne in mind. We have a Spanish judge on the bench, and, of course, his sympathies will be with the Alvarados. This means that we must lay the foundations for a change of venue. He will not grant it, but we must compel him. It can be done by proving that he has vested rights along the river. Go even so far as to trace the property rights of his sisters, his cousins, and his aunts. Any circumstance tending to show that he is an interested party will disqualify him for trying the case. If I can get the merest rag of fact to hang a change of venue upon, I shall attempt it, for the whole case may hinge upon his sympathy with his own race."

After these elaborate instructions, the lawyer looked keenly at his associate and said, "Of course, you know that our wrong-doing must be strictly legal; it must not even touch upon crime."

"I understand that, sir," replied Mr. Austin. "You ought to know by this time that you can trust me to keep things straight, so far as violation of law is concerned."

"Yes, I know; I have no fear on that score, but the case is going to be a hard one and we must win at any cost. To do so, certain testimony I need, and that must be forthcoming."

As he finished speaking, his face was a revelation of shrewdness. The bear, the tiger, the beast were all back in his eye,—while the lines across his forehead were deep and jagged. He turned away from Austin and looked toward the place where he had left Helen.

The deluge had not swept him quite off his feet. The sweet influence of the girl clung to him yet. He stepped out of the path and stood beside a clump of sage. As he did so, his feet touched something and before he could see what it was a gray bird fluttered its soft bat-like wings before him and dropped down into the brush only a few feet away. It made not the slightest sound, but from beneath his feet there came a faint scratching against his shoe. He shivered, and, stooping, saw that he had trodden on a nest, and that the wretched little birds were moving about in blind terror.

"Great heavens!" he cried, "have I broken the charm of one of nature's holy places?"

As he looked upon the fledgelings, the image of two women reeled through his brain. One was Helen,—the other was a dark woman, with jet-black eyes,—the latter seeming to be personified by the stricken things at his feet.

“My God!” he thought, “what tragic, tormenting riddle is it that drives me at one moment into heaven and at the next into hell?”



## CHAPTER XI

SOME little idea had Helen of the position she occupied. Some little idea had she of the procedure that must be gone through with in order to clear up the title to her estate; but glimpses of a more just way than that of Mr. Watkins' crowded into her mind. If the river had changed its bed why not call a meeting and invite all the neighbors to discuss the matter. This would bring out the facts and prevent private misunderstandings.

When Mr. Austin returned from the station, she questioned him timidly, rather as one asking a favor than as one having a right to know, and his answers confirmed her in the belief that the case as it stood was a menace to the well being of the community. In all that he said there was a caution and reserve that boded ill for his honesty. Armed with the mollifying ointment of a deferential manner, he seemed to avoid the truth, as he talked and to aim at secrecy.

They were still discussing the business when John Stanford drove up and hitched his horse outside the gate. He had heard of Mr. Watkins' visit, and had come over to obtain what information he might concerning the case. As he walked up to the veranda, he heard Helen and Mr. Austin talking and gathered that the subject under discussion was the

lawsuit. When Helen had introduced her neighbor, the two men entered upon a resumé of the case. John Stanford assumed that there was nothing whatever to worry about.

"Of course, it ain't much of a case," he asserted cheerfully. "Nobody can tell me where the corners of my land are; I wouldn't allow it."

"But questions about boundary lines are always troublesome," remarked Mr. Austin. And, with the scent of possible commissions, he advised the young man to employ Mr. Watkins as his attorney.

"Join with Miss Andrews; the testimony in one case will cover the other and we can work together."

Although John Stanford did not think it was much of a case he was pleased at the suggestion to employ Mark Watkins and to work in company with Mr. Austin and Helen. It was much to his liking, especially as Helen's home seemed to be the center from which all this brilliant business would radiate. He looked at the young girl in admiring bewilderment, expecting her approval; but her face did not show the enthusiasm he had anticipated. He entered, however, into a spirited discussion with Austin, in which he showed a considerable knowledge of metes and bounds.

"I have measured my land with my mother's clothes line, and am willing to swear that the northwest corner comes up with Don Alvarado's fence. It wouldn't make any difference to me what a court decided," he declared stoutly. "When I know a thing, I know it—know it better than any judge does. Lots of judges don't understand the law," he

continued, confounding law and fact, and then, warming up to his subject, he added, "there's only a durned few of them that does!"

In spite of the inadequacy of his remarks, Helen smiled at him and said:

"You have done better than I:— I have no idea at all where my corners are. I know more about my water-right. I helped to lay some of the pipe; don't you remember that second-hand pipe with rusty threads that would not catch? And I know about shutting the headgate when it rains," she went on, "and about the warping of the flume when it is dry; but about the corners and the description in the deed, dear me—I have thought nothing at all about them."

That Helen should defer to his superior knowledge in the matter of corners, flattered John Stanford. It seemed to him not so bad that there should be trouble over the boundary line, since he and Helen were on the same side of the fence. Perhaps, after all, the course of his love might now begin to run smoothly, at any rate, he was quite willing to leave his work and ransack the neighborhood with Mr. Austin in search of testimony.

"It's still early," Austin said. "Let's go to camp-meeting to-night; there we can interview a number of people with very little trouble. We can harness Mr. Watkins' horse and get over there before dark."

Stanford, big with importance, agreed heartily. "Let's get over there and make things hum!"

As the two men went toward the barn, Helen

watched them with a good deal of consternation. It seemed to her that the plan of going to the camp-meeting was detestably clever. She had a notion that camp-meeting was not just the place to go to stir up neighborhood strife. Only an aching sense of her inexperience and inability prevented her from taking the business into her own hands, then and there. She would have sought counsel of old Joe, but, unfortunately, he was ill, having been confined for several days to his bed in the little shack beyond the orchard.

When Hank Austin and John Stanford reached Gospel Swamp, they found an assemblage of all sorts and conditions of people; men with collars and cuffs, and men with woolen shirts open on hairy breasts. Old Hawley, with one suspender lengthened out with a piece of shoestring, and the ex-preacher justice of the peace from Serrano, shaven and shorn. Against a wagon leaned Jack Ball, with hands and arms tattooed like a cannibal's. He was turning the leaves of an open Bible when Mr. Austin addressed him.

"Good evening, that's a good book you are reading."

"Yes," replied the man, "but I don't allow to understand it. I got converted once by means of a preacher what come aboard the *Julia*; but we went to the ice that year and I fell from grace. There was too much fog and wind up there."

"Oh, then you haven't been here long?"

"No, I drifted into San Pedro last month on the

*Neptune.* I'm only waiting for a better boat. The *Neptune's* a nasty little tramp. That's why I quit."

Austin, seeing no prospect of testimony from that source, cut the acquaintance short, and, followed by John Stanford, went into the tent. The congregation was just beginning to sing "Shall we gather at the river; gather with the saints at the river."

"That's all right," laughed Austin, twitching one corner of his eye at his companion; "we'll see how many of them will gather at the river the way we want them to."

The two men passed up the aisle, took seats near the center of the congregation, and listened to the opening prayer. This was followed by an experience meeting, during which a number of men and women testified to their conversion; then came an invitation for those who desired to be prayed for to come forward. Mr. Austin, regarding this as a feasible way of becoming better acquainted, accepted the invitation. He was a shrewd judge of human nature and after half-an-hour on the anxious bench, had no trouble in taking such men as he chose aside and having a little confidential talk with them. Most of them knew about the lawsuit, and self interest and race prejudice already ran high.

"It's a straight case between the Americans and the greasers," declared one old settler, "and we might as well find out now as any time who's who."

"Yes," answered Frank Slater egotistically, "I predicted years ago that we should have trouble with the Spaniards. It seems as if there ain't no place for an honest man nowhere."



Even Mrs. Burlingham had ideas concerning her privileges as an American. "It's pure deviltry," she declared loudly, "for folks like them to pester folks like us."

Notwithstanding the religious aspect of the meeting, men gathered around Mr. Austin to express their opinions about the boundary line, thus giving, unwittingly, the information that he wanted.

To those who sympathized with Don Alvarado the detective gave his most insinuating smile, sometimes taking them aside and making such offers of financial aid as in his judgment would facilitate the business he had in hand.

And the brethren warmed to him in simple confidence.

"It don't make no difference where you be," whispered old man Little to one of his neighbors; "when a man like Mr. Austin wants to see you on biz'ness; camp-meeting's as good as any place!"

So passed the evening, and so grew the storm that threatened to break over the head of Don Juan Alvarado and his neighbors. It was late when Mr. Austin and John Stanford started back to the ranch, and the jingle of gold in the former's pocket was perceptibly lessened. Honest men, like Frank Slater, understood what was wanted and shaped their testimony accordingly.

The methods of Hank Austin struck John Stanford as very shrewd. The audacity of going forward to the mourners' bench to be prayed for, and the liberal use of money, were experiences altogether new to the countryman, and his young blood



cried out for more. As they drove homeward they laid plans for still further exploits in which "John Doe" and "Richard Roe" were to be brought forth from their obscurity and made to assume a habitation and a name.

It was midnight when the young man started for his own home. He went forth into the great stillness, filled with enthusiasm for his new *rôle* as amateur detective. Not a coyote raised its voice, as he rode along; not an owl fluttered its soft wing, but just before he reached his barn a mockingbird suddenly poured forth its night song. It whirled and whistled its roundelay and finally ended by peeping like a hurt chicken. That wonderful voice, as it broke through the still, night air, was the first thing that aroused Stanford to the least sense of his folly in joining the detective in his schemes.

"I wonder, if you are calling to me in particular," he said aloud.

The mocker dropped into a whistle. Pulling his horse up, John Stanford continued:

"Put in your dog call and your quail call; put in your blue-bird call, I like them."

After listening a few moments he led his horse into the barn and fed him, took a look at the corral gate, locked the door, and sought his bed. Next morning he hesitated a little between the waiting work at home and the promised return to the Andrews ranch; but after milking the cows and feeding the chickens the mystic influence of the bird loosened its hold upon him and he saddled his horse and rode away.

He arrived at Helen's house a little after breakfast, and, as luck would have it, met the young lady alone in the garden. Seeing no reason for secrecy, he told her of the happenings of the previous night and ended by saying:

"Austin has had lots of experience in lawsuits! He knows how to work them up all right!"

Helen caught her breath. Perhaps she was not conscious of the resolve that was shaping itself in her brain; but she suddenly turned about and, going directly to Austin, said with an air of offended dignity:

"Is there no principle involved in legal procedure? Do men bribe and deceive because they have a suit at law? I am not satisfied with what you did last night. I do not believe this is a fight between 'greasers' and whites. I know the Alvarados; I have known them all my life. They are estimable people. Don Juan Alvarado is a patriarch in his own family. If I understand the matter at all, it is only a question of fact as to where the river was forty years ago. If it has changed its bed so as adversely to affect us, I fail to see any reason for arraying neighbor against neighbor, or for moving heaven and earth, either to prevent men from testifying, or to induce them to do so. If Juan Alvarado's Spanish grant describes his land as being bounded on the south by the river, and the river is not where it was at the time his deed was made, why not find out the truth and let it go at that?"

Austin was too taken aback to trust himself to speak. He hung his head and rattled some coins in

his pocket, then rose and went toward the barn, leaving Stanford to finish the conversation.

"I don't see how we can work it the way you say;" protested the young man. "All the folks we saw last night thought we ought to fight; them Spaniards have no right to bother us."

"I cannot abide by their judgment," Helen answered, and then went into the house, leaving him alone. Stanford, a good deal shaken up in his mind, went to the barn, where he found Austin preparing for another trip afield.

"This may be just a notion; women are unreasonable creatures," Austin commented. "Yesterday she listened quietly enough to my arguments, though I must admit I saw a dangerous flash in her eyes once or twice. If she should take the reins at this point in the proceedings, all chance of success would be against us."

He went on harnessing as he talked, and when all was ready motioned to Stanford to take the vacant seat at his side. Stanford, somewhat reluctantly, accepted the invitation and the two rode off. When they were out of sight, Helen went to her room and threw herself upon her bed.

"The perplexing, tormenting, worry of it all!" she sighed. "It's too bad to be dragged out of one's pace by such affairs."

After she had indulged in the luxury of a good cry, she rose and went out to the little shack where old Joe lay. As soon as she opened the door, she saw that disease was preying hard upon the tortured body of the Indian and she cast aside all other

thoughts to become physician and nurse. All day she sat by his side, wetting his parched lips and laying cold cloths upon his burning forehead. This loving service helped to keep her from thinking about the law suit, but she could not shake off a forboding of trouble.

It was late when the two men returned from their search for evidence, and the young lady was too tired to see them. But by the next morning there had been born of her deepening convictions a strong desire to postpone the matter and if possible settle it according to some law of ethics not yet revealed to her. Even though she had to face the whole deplorable situation alone she would use her judgment and trust in Providence.

She invited Mr. Austin to breakfast with her and after a few cursory remarks said to him:

"There must be some better way to settle this business than the one you are pursuing. You may tell Mr. Watkins that I wash my hands of the law-suit, as it now stands. Tell him I did not know that people were obliged to resort to such measures for the protection of their rights. Tell him that I did not know one must lose one's self-respect on the bare chance of saving one's property."

"Do you in the least realize what you are saying, Miss Andrews?" Austin asked, looking at her in incredulous wonder.

"Perhaps not. I cannot go into details with you; but you must understand that I see things from a different standpoint than yours."

With one eye still on the money question, Austin

protested that it was not customary for a client to dismiss his attorney without a formal notification and the payment of fees.

"Both of which I shall certainly attend to," responded Helen, a little warmly. While they were still discussing the matter, John Stanford arrived and at once gathered from the words he heard that Helen had become unmanageable.

For a time both men watched the girl with something like awe, but at last Austin turned to Stanford and said:

"'The house is divided against itself,' with no hope that a common understanding can be reached."

Without further parley, Helen bade her visitors good-bye and set out for the shack to attend to her patient, leaving the men all the leisure they desired for their departure.

For three days she fought the fever that was burning the life from poor Joe's enfeebled body. On the fourth day he seemed better; he was less nervous, and he made a sign for food. After he had swallowed a bit of broth, his strength revived a little and he began to talk. At first he rambled on about his parents and his childhood days; but, finally, he tried to reach an old Indian basket which was under his bed. Helen helped to raise it and place it beside him, when he carefully ran his finger round the edge until it reached a little twist in the weave,\* then turned that part with reverent touch to the east.

\* Between the bottom of an Indian marriage basket and its upper half is woven an earth-colored pattern, which runs



After a little silence, the dying Indian put his hand into the basket, and, by feeling about, drew from it a small package which was tied with many a round of leather string. He tried to speak, but his voice trembled, and Helen brought him a glass of port wine, after which he was able to say clearly:—

“My father and my mother were at the Mission Santa Barbara. But the God of the Christians could not keep off the pest, so they ran away and came here and built a home under the Three Trees. It was there that I was born; there by the river, where the fishing was good and where the sweet herbs and roots made living easy. But the San Gabriel padres found us — and compelled my father to go and work for them and they baptized me and called me José, and they made a little picture for my mother — for she had the speech of the Piutes and could not understand the Mission people.”

With trembling hands, old Joe unwrapped the parchment and passed it to Helen. She saw the date and the name, and above these was a little water-color sketch of the Three Trees, with the cross, and the river lapping at their roots.

nearly around the basket, but is not joined at the ends, there being left between them a narrow perpendicular strip of the body-color. This straight, narrow strip represents the passage through which the soul must pass on its journey to higher spheres. In the home of the Indian, the basket is always placed with this line toward the east. On the upper edge of the basket, is a little notch of bark, which the finger can feel in the dark. If the basket is moved in the night, the finger feeling the notch turns it so that it faces the east.



"Can it be," she asked gently, "that you were really born there under the Three Trees, forty years ago?"

"Yes, forty years ago, as it says on the picture," the Indian replied, and went on, huskily:

"The priest called the place holy, because of the cross, but my father was afraid, for he hated the church and the whipping-post and all the ways of the Missions and he was minded to go further into the mountains; but my mother said 'no,' so we staid there for many years. There the medicine men chanted when my mother died, and there my sister was married. But after my mother was gone, the rest moved on to the mountains, and I stayed alone with my broken leg. And then your father came, and took me into his home and told me to stay. And when I was sick, your mother was good to me, and I loved her like my own people."

He paused and seemed so exhausted that Helen feared he might not resume. But, after a little rest, he went on softly yet audibly —

"Now, I go where they are — your mother and mine! I am not a Christian, but my mother, she was. The priest said of a certainty that she would see salvation, though she did run away from the Mission and live the wild life. But me, I served the Indian's God, here by the river. I have seen men who served the Christian's God, but they were more wild and cruel than my people! So I take my chances with the coyotes. Forty years — I have lived — and I have harmed no man — and

now — I go — where the lameness — is — not — and where —”

He ceased to speak and, soon the fatal rattle choked his breath. When the great calm, which Helen knew to be the end, had settled upon his face, she still sat by his side.

He was the last link that bound her to her parents, and she felt more utterly alone now than ever before. She struggled with her emotion, knowing only too well that none of the people about her would share in her grief. As she recalled his caution and his shrinking from contact with men, she decided that she would not call upon any of her neighbors to join with her in her mourning. She staid alone by the body all through the night, and in the morning she sent for an Indian sheep-herder and for Juan Ruiz.

When they came Helen instructed them to make the last resting place beside the graves of her parents. When all was ready they wrapped the body in an Indian blanket and lowered it into the grave. On his breast they placed the marriage basket of his mother, with the white line turned toward the east, as was the custom of his tribe.

Not being willing to mock her dead with meaningless words and ceremonies, Helen lifted her own hand and repeated a short poem. Then added:

“Oh, mother earth, take this stricken body into thy treasure-house, and give back to me the grasses and the flowers resulting from its decay. Hold it in trust for me, and sing of it to me.”

Then, as the clear note of a bird came to her

ear, she added, "Warble on, you gray-brown bird. Pour your chant from the bushes, for I cannot compose a sermon that will equal yours."

For a few moments, the bird shook out his wild carol, to which the three listened in breathless silence. Then Helen dropped a handful of dust upon the body and the two men filled in the grave.

## CHAPTER XII

HELEN was tired after the week of care and anxiety attendant upon the death of Joe, and the presence in her home of Mr. Austin and John Stanford. She shut herself into her own room, fully determined to sit peacefully while Nature proceeded with her eternal business of recuperation. But the western mind does not long remain in a state of inactivity; within two days things to be done were intruding themselves upon her. She did not care, yet, to ask herself what these things were; but she could not blind herself to the fact that one miserable episode stood out beyond the others and demanded a place in her thoughts. This was the title to her land.

Her woman's capacity for playing hide and seek with herself could not conceal the fact that, sooner or later, the insinuating Austin and the foolish Stanford must be reckoned with. It seemed very desolate that she must face the whole deplorable situation alone. Although John Stanford's title was in as much danger as her own and their interests were practically the same, his childish estimate of law and courts made her understand that she could look for no assistance from him. In the stress of the hour she had quite forgotten the baptismal certificate and its mute testimony on her behalf; but

now it flashed into her mind and she wondered whether the precious document was safe out in the shack. Putting on her sunbonnet, she walked through the orchard and past the graves to the place. Everything was as the sheep-herder and Ruiz had left it. The articles that had been in the basket lay heaped in the middle of the bed where they had been hurriedly thrown when it was emptied to be placed in the grave. She sat down and looked over old Joe's collection of treasures.

It was not a very valuable one: Only the splendid wing of an eagle; some wampum, long since useless as money; a bear's tooth; a few feathers, and the package containing the baptismal certificate. Over the head of the bed hung the bow and arrow, with which the dead man had supplied himself with food, when the unkindness of Mrs. Burlingham had driven him back to his primitive habits.

Helen understood the language of each of these trifles and pondered over them long and lovingly, as she sat in the only chair the place afforded. Then, taking the package and smoothing the buckskin picture out, she spread it before her on the bed. She had hardly thought of it as art; but now she noticed that the old padre had done his work with considerable skill. The mottled bark of the sycamores; the cross so strangely formed by nature; the color and perspective, and most important of all, the river lapping the roots of the trees, were clear and distinct.

Helen saw at once the possibilities of the document — saw that it might be used to quiet the tur-

moil caused by the lawsuit, and to prevent any further dispute about the boundary line.

She felt something like superstitious awe as she smoothed the wrinkles out of the bit of buckskin. She saw that all the wisdom of all the lawyers could not prove the location of the river forty years back as did this little piece of the old padre's handiwork. She wrapped it up carefully, as though it were a sacred thing, and put it into her bosom, then walked slowly back toward the house.

The sun was low on the horizon. Majestic fog banks were turning to gold in the west, with here and there an opening of misty green. As the girl felt the great stillness creeping over the landscape, she turned and looked again toward the graves.

"Poor old Joe," she whispered to herself, "the last one that I could call my own has gone to sleep on the same dreamless pillow as my father and my mother. No companionship is left me, and yet, I know of a certainty that everything is left me. If I bend my head and listen, I seem to hear a deep melody emanating from his grave. If I can use this little picture on his baptismal certificate to prevent neighborhood strife it will be in harmony with the love I have for all my dead."

Then, raising her face to the old cypress tree, she added: "Bend down, old tree, and breathe to me the mystery of my loved ones. Do they whisper through your sighing leaves? Do they float lightly above you in piney scents?"

Thus did Helen pray until the light faded from the sky. Thus did she feel her way toward the



higher levels of human conduct. When she went to her room she tried to read a book, but her mind drifted to the buckskin picture in her bosom and the best way to make use of it. After a time it occurred to her to go to Señor Alvarado, as a friend and neighbor, and show him the curious document. Perhaps the old Spaniard might suggest some way of settling the question without further legal procedure; perhaps he might look at the matter from her standpoint, rather than from that of her neighbors. Calmed by this thought, she went to bed and soon fell asleep.

The next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, she put on a soft wool skirt, tied the strings of a white sunbonnet under her chin, and went to the barn. Mandy Jones saw her coming and gave a joyous little whinny.

"You're tired of standing still; you want a good run, don't you?" Helen called while still some distance away.

As luck would have it, the sheep dog was there, visiting Nero. Both dogs looked up inquiringly at Helen, as much as to say, "Can we go?"

"Yes, you can go," she told them, and, patting Maria's head, she added:

"It will be a recommendation to have you along. All the Spanish people know you, and you know their language better than I do."

So, talking to the dogs, with a word now and then to Mandy, she adjusted the saddle and lengthened the bridle; then looked with critical exactness at a

cracked hoof, and, seeing that it was not deep enough to be painful, she mounted and was off.

It was a long ride to Don Juan Alvarado's, but the morning was glorious, and, as the vast distances came into view, the sadness in Helen's face was turned into beauty almost divine. The sensitive right hand, as it held the rein over Mandy's neck became an emotional index which pointed to a nature beautiful and good; while the draperies which clung to her body fell in folds suited to a picture of the Virgin. Occasionally she stopped and waited for Maria, who limped behind, and once she drew rein for a band of sheep that were being driven to the lower levels of the Santa Gertrudis ranch.

When she reached the long avenue of pepper-trees leading up to the house of Señor Alvarado, there was a little flutter in her heart lest the family should have been influenced by neighborhood gossip; but as soon as the young people recognized her, they came out with smiling faces — Ramona, Alfonso, Jacinta, Manuel, Carlos, and little Dolores — all ran to welcome her. As Helen expected, the sheep dog was a surprise to them, for the Americans did not usually have trained dogs.

"How came she with you?" Manuel asked. "She is Spanish! She was raised on the Cumulos Rancho and belonged to José Aguilar." He caressed the silken ears of Maria and went on:

"She had a long line of good mothers, and she was trained by Delgado, and then broke his heart by losing the use of her leg."

Then the youth must need see the spot where the

fang went in, and must call Padre Tomás to see, for the padre had known the dog in San Diego county. After this Alfonso told how Maria had staid by the sheep, although she was in mortal agony, and dragged herself from side to side to keep the band together, giving no hint until her tongue hung out and her eyes saw nothing. Here Alfonso crossed himself between his two perfectly formed brows and Padre Tomás cast his eyes deep on the ground.

Then Juan Ruiz took the bridle from Helen, while Ramona insisted that she must dismount and stay at least a week. This was all very soothing to Helen's sensitive nature and she gave up her horse and stood with the girls under the pepper tree while they poured into her ears the news of the ranch; how three hundred lambs had been lost early in the season, during a heavy rain; how a bear had been killed in the cañon, even how a Mexican herder had lain all day with his face in the dust, leaving his sister's child alone with the dogs; and then how the bees had stored honey in the loft of the house until it ran down and spoiled a picture of the Virgin.

At last, they came to the veranda, little Dolores now talking of the progress of her mother's ailment, which was too much fat. Dozing in his chair, sat Don Juan Alvarado, the influence of good wine from San Gabriel being upon him. The round belly of Padre Tomas shook as he saw the ungraceful attitude into which his host had fallen. He reached out with a peacock feather and tickled the nose of the old Don, who awoke with a start, to join with

the rest in good-humored laughter at the reverend father's trick. Then, seeing Helen, the old Spaniard, notwithstanding his eighty years, sprang to his feet.

"My faith!" he cried, "it is the young lady from the Three Trees!"

"Yes, señor, you have not forgotten me," Helen answered.

"No, no!" replied the old man, "but why do you come so seldom? It is long, a year at least, since we have seen you here."

"Oh," Helen explained, "duties and duties, and still more duties!"

"Señorita!" cried Señor Alvarado, in surprise. "Such a young woman with duties! There are no duties that cannot be put off until to-morrow."

"*Manana* is a good word," admitted Helen, "but we Americans do not yet understand it."

"But you must learn it; it is the saving of all the wear and tear of life."

Padre Tomás brought out two chairs and motioned Helen to sit down. The priest quite agreed with Señor Alvarado that it were better to sleep and wait for to-morrow.

"Yes, padre, that may do for you. But with me it is to-day — that is why I am here. I have come to show you something;" and the girl, turning to Don Juan, added, "something that old Joe left; something that bears upon the troublesome boundary line."

At this, Helen reached into her pocket and brought out the baptismal record.

“In a basket, under his bed, was this. I hope it means something to us both; I hope we can use it in the interest of peace. I felt a little timid about coming to you — but —” she hesitated.

“You did not suppose an Alvarado could be discourteous under his own roof?” the old man demanded loftily.

Helen blushed and hung her head. Padre Tomás, seeing her discomfort, reached out his hand for the package. He removed the many yards of string, and, when the certificate was at last in his hand, he looked at it long and fondly.

“Yes, yes,” he cried, “this is the work of Padre Dumetz! He had some knowledge of drawing, and he took pleasure in making sketches when time and opportunity offered. I have seen many of his baptism certificates embellished with sketches of the place where the child was born.”

After a careful examination of the details of the picture, he passed it over to Señor Alvarado.

“Ah!” the old Spaniard exclaimed, when he had glanced at it, “the Three Trees, and the river running so close to their roots.”

Then, calling his eldest son, he said, “Look! look! — this, indeed, is testimony!”

“The lawsuit is not to my liking,” said Helen. “I know but little about such things, but I wish that the business might be arranged without neighborhood strife. For my part, if I am a trespasser on your land, I shall certainly give way; but if my father’s land is where he thought it to be, I should like to have the title made clear.”



Padre Tomás was the first to speak.

"You ask only what is just, and you are wise in coming to us, before going further."

Helen's heart came clear up into her throat. This was more than she had dared hope for, and when Manuel took the sketch and pointed to the river washing the roots of the Three Trees, she could scarcely speak for emotion.

"This lawsuit is not as bad as you think," said Don Juan. "It is only an attempt to establish the boundary line, so that no question will arise in the future. It can be adjusted as well out of court as in. It is the policy of the lawyers to bring into litigation these things; but it is not necessary. It would be far better if neighbors would settle such differences between themselves."

"Yes. It is the cupidity of the men who live by the law, as well as the ignorance of their clients, that makes such trouble," remarked the priest.

"Neither my son nor myself wish to take anything from your people," continued Señor Alvarado. "A strip of land a mile wide is nothing to an Alvarado! But it is necessary that the record should be made clear, as necessary for you, as for my family."

Then Padre Tomás spoke again. He knew something of law, as well as of religion, and he had had trouble enough with boundary lines. Holy Church owned land in plenty, and had often had to defend her title. He recounted cases where guns and pistols had been resorted to, and finally turning to Helen said:



"You are of age, are you not, daughter?"

Helen signified by a nod that she was.

"Then, let us settle this affair ourselves! An agreement between the parties at interest, of which you are one, properly signed and recorded, is all that is necessary."

"It must be so. It is reasonable and right," added Señor Alvarado.

"Then," Manuel spoke, "let us settle it."

"I am willing to leave the line as it now is;" asserted the father, "and if the young lady is willing to accept for all time that as a boundary line, we may at once lay the matter at rest. As for the other settlers on the river, they will also be protected by our act, or they may, if they wish, procure the same terms by applying to me."

Padre Tomás was rejoiced. He declared that he would draw up an agreement which when signed, sealed and delivered, could be recorded; he would do even more—he would give the blessing of Holy Church upon the transaction.

"It is better than my best hopes," cried Helen. "I am delighted that all this trouble should be so easily disposed of."

The padre drew from the bosom of his cassock a packet of soft, foreign paper and broke the confining threads; then, asking to be excused, went to his room where he remained for half an hour when he returned with a document which, although it was unique, both in form and substance, had in it the ring of absolute sincerity. Not being a literary artist, the priest took no account of trifling shades

of meaning; but in sheer delight of peace went straight to the point and covered the whole subject in less than a page.

We, the undersigned, being of sound mind and of legal age, and having in our hearts the welfare of the community in which we live, do hereby agree that the south line of the Rancho Alvarado shall remain forever in the same place that settlers on the north boundary line of the Santa Gertrudis Rancho have recognized it to be in years past. In other words, that the change in the bed of the San Gabriel river, which occurred last year, shall not be used as a pretext for increasing or diminishing the holdings of any *bona fide* owner.

(Signed)

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.....  
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.....

Witnessed by

.....  
.....

Dated,

On his return to the veranda, the whole family assembled, while the priest read aloud the agreement. There was no objection, and no lack of harmony between the interested parties, and, after a little discussion, both Señor Alvarado and Helen signed the paper, with Padre Tomas and Juan Ruiz as witnesses.

Thus came to an end the whole business of establishing the southern boundary line of the great Alvarado Rancho.

Helen could scarcely realize that the cumbersome machinery of the courts could be so easily stopped;

she could scarcely believe that the signing of so unpretentious a bit of paper meant so much to herself and to the community. She did not know how to express her feelings, and was relieved when the girls insisted that she must go to the back of the house and see a woodchuck which was chained to a tree.

As they crossed the patio, Helen noticed that there were many maids hurrying to and fro across the earthen floor of the kitchen, and she began to understand that her visit was the occasion of unusual activity there. She felt a little nervous for fear she might prove lacking in the dinner etiquette, for the Alvarados lived after the strictest style of the Spanish aristocracy. She attempted to escape by asking Manuel to bring her horse, and pleading a desire to reach home before night, but that worthy son of a worthy family held up his hands in amazement. Could an Alvarado do anything so gross as to permit a guest to go from his home without a full stomach?

"Oh no, it will never do for you to go now, señorita. You must stay till dinner is over. There is time enough — if you do not go home to-day — Mañana, you know."

The girls also clamored for a hearing. It had been long since they had seen Helen; would she go now and not come for another year? But the case was closed by Señor Alvarado himself, who declared positively that the little señorita could not be permitted to depart. With all this sweet compelling, Helen found it impossible to leave before dinner was served.

They were very slow, those dusky Indian servants, and the dinner seemed long in coming. Helen went with the girls to see the colts, and she watched the proud peacock spread his tail. She peered at the great tanks of wine and at the sacks of wool piled high in the barn.

At last the bell rang and the family fell into line, with the Señora in advance, followed by her daughters, her daughters-in-law, and her granddaughters. The stout old dame took a seat at the foot of the table, and her husband, with his eldest son on his right, took his place at the head. On his left were placed Padre Tomas and Helen. A great platter of rice and onions, fried in tallow, stood before the head of the family, while below were covered dishes from which came the savory odor of *chile con carne* and *enchiladas*.

Before the Señora was a great silver tea-pot, from which went up the odor of tea. The dishes were of old blue, imported from China in camphor wood chests in the days when sailing vessels bore the trade of the Pacific coast. On each piece, in softest blue, were symbols and legends, not a word of which any of the family could translate, although the priest had mastered one or two of the ideas and pointed knowingly to the eight-fold path and the three-toed dragon.

"I think," remarked the padre when they were all seated, "that the Virgin must have sent you to settle the lawsuit. Of all my duties, I like none so little as having a hand in neighborhood quarrels."

Señor Alvarado was also pleased that the litiga-

tion was averted. "I am an old man, and I would not leave quarrels hanging over the heads of my sons," he said; to which his family said "amen and amen."

After the meal, Helen insisting, Manuel brought Mandy Jones to the door and she was soon on her way home, the lawsuit settled, the ponderously correct documents in the case swept away like so much chaff and peace brooding over the neighborhood.

## CHAPTER XIII

MARK WATKINS took his dismissal from the case of Alvarado *vs.* Helen Andrews *et al*, philosophically. He was too large a man to be shaken by the loss of a few clients or the failure of a case. He withstood stormy weather like some splendid castle and like a castle looked all the better for the washing down. He belonged to the order of men who possess genius enough to see that failure means only the reshaping of plans. In this particular case, however, he had to deal with a girl who was young and beautiful, and more than usually persistent. She had interfered with his management against all precedent, and what was worse, she had been successful; but as he still had the probate matter in hand and was more or less of a necessity to Helen he decided to hold matters in *statu quo* and trust to luck for a favorable turn of the wheel.

Austin did not take matters so philosophically. "The fact is," he declared, "I feel insulted. I don't believe women understand business or have any right to know the methods by which lawsuits are won."

"Oh, never mind a little thing like that," Mr. Watkins advised. "Go to work on another case. The Anaheim Water Company are prosecuting Lugo for diverting water from the Santa Ana river. Go



down there; or go to Sawpit Cañon; there's a quarrel up there over the water. Plenty to do — plenty to do!"

Austin backed up against a book case and would have continued the discussion; but Mr. Watkins, with an armful of books, was already on his way to court where he had a case on trial.

He reached the place where law — and sometimes justice — is dispensed, in time to hear the clerk call "*Bowerman vs. Cole*," and answered "ready" before he was half-way up the aisle. Depositing his pile of books on a table and wiping the perspiration from his brow, he drew out a brief and proceeded to read and quote such authorities as he thought favorable to his client. Thus he lumbered along for half-an-hour, when the judge announced that he would take the matter under advisement. He left his books on the table and going across the street, entered a saloon and called for a drink.

It so happened that as he leaned over the bar, there came through the side door a woman of the town, known as "Jennie." She was a woman who had some kindness in her heart, and, under more favorable circumstances, would have had considerable beauty; a woman by nature witty and glad, but by some event, written ages before in the stars, now lost to shame. She kissed her hand, throwing it lightly to Mr. Watkins, and together they drank and drank again. No sort of etiquette was observed; they laughed and joked and finally he said "Keep a light in your window for me to-night," and bowing went back to his office.

As usual, people were waiting for him. Men with large moneyed interests; men with a will to quarrel; men with vengeance written in their faces waited for him. Young Charles Bennett, suing his own sister for properties left by their father, was there; a doctor, suing his patient; an undertaker, joining with a milliner to recover from a bereaved widow,—they, and the drink, and Jennie, made up his day.

In justice to Mark Watkins it must be conceded that he was a genuine enthusiast with respect to his profession. He was the son of a preacher whose zeal had descended to his child in the form of a fierce desire for success at the bar, and as the curse of inadequacy was not upon him, he seemed in a fair way to realize his ambition. Through skillful strategy he had concealed the skeletons in his closet and kept up the appearance of the man who is. The luck of the English army was no more proverbial than the luck of Mark Watkins, attorney at law, upstairs in the old Temple Block. Up to the time he had met Helen he had looked upon marriage as a form of legalized sensualism, but this horribly gross conception of the domestic relations was breaking down under the subtle influence of the pure country girl. The passion that swayed him in her presence however, lost itself in the shifting scenes of female beauty as it passed to and fro on the street. Almost any woman who was well groomed and rubbed down, like a prize animal at a show, attracted him for a time.

On this particular occasion it was Jennie. He

thought of her all day and at night ate a hearty dinner, drank several times at the bar, and by ten o'clock walked the cursed hell of Los Angeles streets, until he came to the house where a light shown in the window for him.

He knew the hall and the stairway, and was just putting his foot on the first step when a shivering little hand touched his. Glancing down, he saw standing by his side a girl of not more than six or seven years, who looked up into his face and said:

"Mr. Watkins, mama wants to see you. She is sick and you must come. Jennie told her you would be here to-night, and I have waited to take you."

He knew the child only too well, and he knew the mother only too well. She was a Mexican woman, once young and pretty, but now relegated to the past in his affections.

"You should not be on the street at this late hour of the night, you little gutter-snipe," he said. "I thought you had gone to live with your uncle."

Luisa looked at him with pleading in her eyes and with a little quiver in her voice, and said, "Come!"

"How far is it?" he questioned, beginning to soften.

"Not far — just down here."

As he turned to go with her, he saw that her clothing consisted only of a nightdress and that it gaped open in front, showing a flat, childish bosom.

"You are cold, Luisa," he said, trying to pull the garment together.

"No," she answered, "I have been in bed with mama, and she is hot — awful hot."

It was only past three glaring doors that the child led him and then turned into an alley through which they reached an old house, standing back of a harness shop.

"Here is where mama lives," the child said, pulling him through the door of the crumbling old adobe. Once within, the house appeared much better than its outside. The walls were whitewashed and clean, with pictures of saints here and there and, in a niche in the wall, a plaster cast of the Virgin, over which was draped a drawn work scarf, patiently wrought at the expense of eyes and nerves. Over the back of a chair was folded a bright Indian blanket, in one corner of which was a svastica, woven in white on a black background, the blanket being so folded that the great symbol was conspicuous.

At first the room seemed unoccupied, but at the far side, concealed by a gray curtain, was a bed, toward which the child was now dragging her visitor. When she pushed the curtain aside, Mark Watkins saw a woman, so weak that she could scarcely move her lips to speak.

"You'll stay with mama, won't you," pleaded Luisa. "She will be well to-morrow; Jennie said so!"

The lawyer passed his soft hand over the forehead of the sick woman. It was several moments before she seemed to know that he was there; but

after his cool fingers had rested a little upon her brow, she broke out in disjointed sentences:

"It's about the child! Will the sisters take her?"

"Do not worry about that," Mr. Watkins said gently. "Try and go to sleep."

"I am sick, oh, so sick, and I must know about my little girl." I wish you had come sooner. Will Sister Simplicity come? Can you find her and bring her here? Can you —" her speech was interrupted by a fierce dragging at the clothes about her throat. "Holy Mother what shall I do?" she gasped.

At this, the child crept very close to Mr. Watkins. Not for any consideration would she again lie down beside her mother.

"Poor little soul," he said, "you are afraid?"

"I only like to lean against you," the child returned shyly. "Your clothes are so nice, like the priest's clothes. You won't go away until it gets light, will you?"

"No, Luisa, I will not leave you alone. Sit here on my knee and go to sleep."

The child snuggled close to him. He pulled her gown about her thin legs, and then, turning to the woman, he asked: "Have you taken the medicine here in the glass?"

She moved her hand a little toward her head, but her parched lips were past speaking.

"This is horrible," Mark Watkins whispered, and as he said it, he laid a protecting hand upon

the child's head. She seized it and kissed it and the pathos of the situation brought something like a tear to the man's eye.

Long before morning, the woman was dead and the terrified child had sobbed herself to sleep in Mark Watkins' arms. Still holding her snugly he used his left hand to fold the Indian blanket into proper shape for a bed on the floor and then tenderly laid the child down.

As he did so, the sharp profile of her face fell upon the whitewashed wall. He paused and held the child for a moment in the same position, then turned her head backward toward himself, then back toward the wall.

"My God!" he cried, "that is a profile of my mother! Awake, the child looks like the dead woman, with the same eye color and the same hollowness of cheek; but asleep, the face is that of my mother! Identification there is none; proof of relationship there is none; but a curved line of the forehead, a straight nose, and a mouth with great power of loving—that was my mother and that is the child!"

Memory of the gray bird that had flown away so noiselessly when he stepped upon its nest near the railway station came back to his mind. He shuddered and closed his eyes, trying to shut out the truth. When he opened them again, he gazed first at the sleeping child and then at her dead mother and was filled, for the first time in his life with repulsion and rage against himself. He could remember the Mexican girl as he had first known



her only a few years back — very poor, very innocent, and very kind. She was pretty and confiding and he had provided for her needs; but at the same time he had left the trail of the serpent upon her. With a dumb knowledge of her degradation, the poor girl had gone from worse to worst, until a few short years of the brothel had eaten out her life. As the lawyer recalled these facts, such a frightful sense of guilt came upon him that he almost feared he was in the first stages of that mania which sees uncanny things. He tried to put two and two together so they would not make four, tried to make himself believe that the drink had made him sick, but to no avail.

“Some day I shall go mad,” he said to himself. “Some day the theories of my father about damnation will come true.”

He rose and went to the door. There was no light in the alley, but at the back of the harness shop was a misty figure that seemed in the dimness, like an apparition. The head was thrown back, and the hands seemed to be clutching at something in his belt. The ground was strewn with seraps of leather, which, in the dampness, gave off an offensive odor.

He had not the courage to speak, but he gazed into the gloom when the figure muttering as it went moved away.

“Heavens!” cried Mr. Watkins, “I am as weak as a woman!”

The blood throbbed through his veins like liquid fire. He took out a fine linen handkerchief and

wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead, then went back into the room and stood above the sleeping child.

He thought of Jennie, the woman he was to have met that night. She was also the daughter of a libertine; she had once told him so when the drink was upon her,—told him wildly that the sins of her father were being visited upon her head, and he wondered if this child of his was not predestined to a life of shame.

Then came a vision of Helen, in her purity, and stood before him, Helen! There was no hope now that he should ever speak to her again. To tell her the truth, he would not dare; to deceive her, he could not. Whatever else he did, he would draw the line at deceiving Helen. Better that he should never have a wife or any other child to inherit his beastly nature. Better that he give himself to repairing the damage he had already done, than that he should snatch happiness by scorching the virtuous life of Helen. It cost him a good deal to screw down the lid upon this coffin; but he did it—all in the half-lighted room of the old adobe, with the dead woman on the bed, and the child asleep on the floor.

The night's work used Mark Watkins up. He scarcely felt able to formulate any plan for the morrow, yet he knew that he must act and that quickly.

Before the child awakened, he must bring some one to his assistance.

The streaks of gray were already turning the

east to yellow, as he took his hat and went out very softly, looking back to see that Luisa was still asleep. It was only a short distance across the plaza to the Church of Our Lady of the Angels, and thither he hastened. He rang the bell with so much vigor that it brought an astonished priest to the door in double quick time. Fortunately, Sister Simplicitas was just coming in from some errand of mercy. It was a lucky circumstance; he had hadly reckoned on such expedition. The priest directed the visitor to the sister, and went yawningly back to bed.

Sister Simplicitas received the lawyer with the air of a woman whose entire character rests upon the noiseless conviction that she is divinely appointed to her work. Her face had a moral loftiness about it which, had it not been marred by an expression of shrewdness, would have been beautiful.

Mr. Watkins addressed her very measuredly, as becomes a man of the world to a saintly woman. Would she go to the house of the dead? Would she look after the child? Would she see that mass was said for the repose of the departed soul? and, finally, would she send the bills to himself?

Sister Simplicitas would do all this, and much more. She had had long experience of such matters. In the convent behind the cathedral were many children — some with fathers — some without — all cared for by Holy Church.

“Keep your own secrets,” she said; “these things are easily arranged.”

It was a great relief to the overwrought man to

find how readily Sister Simplicitas understood; even though she were plotting to the advantage of Holy Church, she was, at that moment, an angel of mercy to him.

"I am drenched with fog," she said, "I must go and put on dry clothing. Then I will come and take the whole matter into my hands. I will bring the child to the convent and see that the woman lies in consecrated ground."

Fearing that the little one might awaken and be frightened, Mr. Watkins walked briskly back to the old adobe. He had never before seen this portion of the city so early in the morning. The women of the street were still dragging their soiled skirts over the pavements. One of them addressed him familiarly as "Watkins." The reek of alkali mud was in the air; a spavined old horse had broken his stake-rope and was standing, with wistful eyes, before the hay market, while everything seemed choking in the cold, damp fog.

"By Heaven!" the lawyer cried, "I wonder how low I am to fall!" Again the shattered bird's nest came to his mind. Had it not been a forecast of all this? He could feel the scratching of the terrified little bird upon his shoe, and the flutter of the gray mother, as she dropped so noiselessly out of sight. The unsparing logic of his mind reasoned, as he re-crossed the plaza, that he had made for himself a hell to live in and that he must accept the consequences. Nothing that his father had taught him about salvation seemed in the least to help him now. Not until this frightful night

had he realized that that tameless thing called sex had its anchorage deep in eternity, with possibilities on the one hand of immortal fruitage, and on the other of a bird of prey sitting famished in the midst of what it feeds upon.

"Oh Heavenly Father," he cried in agony; "what is love? Is it a psychic phenomenon that leads to the stars, or is it a degrading passion that leads to the abyss!"

When Sister Simplicitas arrived she found Mr. Watkins leaning dejectedly against the wall.

"Holy Mother!" she exclaimed, "why did not you send for me sooner? The child should have been taken away before the mother died. The priest should have been here to lay the blessed wafer between the woman's lips."

Mark Watkins grew nervous at her reproaches.

"Always send soon enough," continued the sister. "We keep the means for bodily relief at hand, as well as materials for the sacrament."

Having no excuse to offer in reply, the lawyer kept his eyes upon the floor and, after a short time, he left the place and went to his hotel.

## CHAPTER XIV

AT the Gospel Swamp camp-meeting, the settlement of the case of Alvarado *vs.* Helen Andrews, *et al*, by a mere slip of a girl and a Spaniard, was looked upon with disfavor.

"Jest a trick of the greaser to git ahead of a poor woman," was what Sam Lindley called it. But Benson, who was holding down a claim high up on the grant line of the Chula Vista, said: "It was good enough fer her."

"I don't believe in wimmen being so durned smart. No sir-ee; they ought to keep their own place."

"There's a good many of that kind nowadays," replied San Lindley, "and between them and the greasers it's hard on us as wants to do right, and git along. I tried to buy that herding horse of hers the other day, but she wouldn't talk to me at all! It's nothing but a little bronco; but I needed it, and, don't you know, I couldn't come nowhere nigh getting it? Why, the girl jest turned round and went into the house!"

"I can't deal with her, neither," said Benson. "I've been to her time and agin, to try and git something, but she don't never seem to want to trade."

A few nights later, the old preacher, justice of the



peace, of Serrano, came over to Gospel Swamp to attend prayer meeting and was put upon to answer questions as to the legality of settling the law suit in so simple a way.

"I don't see how it can be a regular court document, drawed up by a woman and a Spaniard," said he. "Besides, jest look at all the fees that ought to come to me and the constable! Mileage counts up, no matter if we do s'peen by mail."

"That's the idee;" agreed Benson, "it's a loss all round. You ought to get your costs, the constable ought to get his mileage for s'peenyng and we ought to get our witness fees."

At this, the judge assumed a judicial air and said:

"I try not to be an extremist, but it's my opinion that when a case gets started, the law ought to take its course."

Jake White, who was listening to the conversation, gave his trousers a hitch and winked knowingly. He was a lean man, with a long, bony neck and hooked fingers — a man who could neither brand, nor herd, nor drive, but who testified eternally to the survival of scandal. He turned half way around and sent a long line of tobacco juice toward the door, then looking squarely into Billy's face drawled:

"I suppose them Spaniards got her up there just to see what they could do. Them kind is bad."

Billy was shocked. He put his hand in his pocket and went over to where his mother was sitting. There had never been any evil talk in the neighborhood about Helen, but now the air was full of the brooding that hatches it.

## CHAPTER XV

As for Helen, when the lawsuit was settled, and old Joe's death fairly out of her mind, she set out to take a long rest. She tacked a piece of canvass on to a stretcher, gathered up her paints and brushes and went and sat under the Three Trees. It was one of those days when genius woos and whispers through the leaves; when the shrubs break into strange blossoming and every little insect hum fills the soul with rapture. To help her inspiration she had brought with her the little landscape which Father Dumetz had painted so many years before. As she spread it on the ground and looked at it she said: "Yes, the old priest had the true art instinct. Nothing weak; nothing small; nothing pretty. Is there Nero?"

The dog wagged his bony tail.

"Do you think I could paint anything that Mr. Watkins would like?" she added, patting the dog's ears. "He knows so much more than I do."

Nero kept wagging. He loved to hear her talk and on this occasion she asked his opinion many times. She took her canvas and with a piece of chalk sketched in a background. Creative desire in Helen had always lost itself in heavenly visions. Her great love embraced all that was beautiful and

all that was not beautiful. The hues of yellow, red, and green seemed to her no more worthy of her brush than the loam, and the falling leaf, and it was her intention to express herself this one day on canvas just as the mood swayed her.

But as she was trying to lay on the misty purple of the distance, she was interrupted by the crack of a gun and the death shriek of a rabbit. She sprang to her feet and looked toward a gray cloud of smoke that rose lazily over the willows.

"Poor wounded creature," she cried. "Why must people kill things?" She was scarcely over the shock before she saw through the brush the yellow hair of John Stanford. He was holding his gun proudly, as though he felt it to be a manly thing to break into that soft day by slaying an innocent wild creature.

"Why did you shoot the rabbit? You have committed a crime against nature!" she said.

"The country is full of the pests," replied the young man, still proud of his markmanship and his gun. Helen paid no attention to the answer, but began pulling away the bushes to find the wounded creature. She had not far to go ere the tracks ended in a few scattered tufts of soft gray fur, and a blood patch on the sand.

"Can't you see?" she asked, "that you have taken a life? The rabbit was here as divinely as we are here."

Stanford made no reply, but with the butt of his gun pushed away a branch of greasewood and there, beneath its fragrant leaves, lay the dead rabbit, with

eyes staring wide open, while at her breast a young one was nosing.

Helen's face was tense with questioning wrath. "Oh, the tragedies of the little wild things that live in the bushes," she cried.

John Stanford still smiled foolishly. There was not a hint in his demeanor that in cutting off the network of nerves which connected the wild mother with its offspring, he had done more than show his skill as a hunter.

Helen took the little creature that was tugging at its dead mother and wiped the blood from its face with her handkerchief.

"Poor little, helpless thing," she said, then, turning almost fiercely upon the man, "can you not see the cruelty of it?"

At this Stanford made a dash at the squirming ball of fur and called, Nero!

Helen, however, rescued the young rabbit and placed it carefully in her blouse pocket. John Stanford made an experimental motion with his hand toward her waist, but the girl repelled him with such fury in her eye that he walked away and leaned with his back against one of the sycamores.

Without any further conversation, Helen gathered up her painting utensils and prepared to cut the episode short by going home.

"Look here," said John, shaking one leg to bring his trousers down to the top of his shoe, "it's clear as mud that you and me can't get along."

"Yes," said Helen; "it is clear as mud."

"Well, maybe I wouldn't never have done for a

painter, but there's some things that I know more about than you do,—one's rabbits. They chaw and gnaw and keep a chawing and gnawing 'till half the trees in the orchard have been gnawed, one time or another. I've been thankful a good many times that the Lord made me a good shot. Shooting's in my line; but painting, pshaw, it encourages all the pests in the country. There ain't much money in it, either, as I can see."

Helen looked at him almost sadly. "No, but it makes one think," she said.

"Thinking is all right," he said a little doubtfully, "but some men think too much. You'll find out if you keep talking to that man Watkins. I heard rather a hard story about him the other day when I was in town."

Helen turned a withering look upon her companion.

"I don't see why a man without brains needs to hate a man with brains," she replied.

"Oh now, quit your fooling," he replied. "I guess I ain't quite an idiot!"

Helen took her paints out of the box in which she had brought them and put the motherless rabbit in their place, then, taking off her apron, rolled all her utensils together and without even a "good-bye" turned her feet into the path that led toward home.

Thus ended the first day of Helen's vacation and the second was no better. Burlingham was taken worse. He had been out watching the balers and the dust made him cough. Instead of going away, he lay down on the grass and when one of the men

noticed him, he was wearily holding a handkerchief to his mouth to keep the blood back. A boy was sent in haste for Mary Jane, who was in the orchard gathering lemons. She ran to her father and, raising him to a sitting position, cried:

"Dear old, sweet pap! can't you get up?"

"I don't know, Mary Jane," he replied. "I am powerful weak."

She put her arms about him and steadied him to the house.

"Pappy's got a hemm'rage, and I don't know what to do," Mary Jane called to her mother. At the sight of the blood, Mrs. Burlingham softened into a cry.

"Why, pa, what done it?" she asked.

"Poor, dear, little old pap," said Mary Jane. "I am going for the doctor." At this she left her father to her mother's care and ran into Helen's room.

"Can I take Mandy?" she asked, "pap's sick!"

"Certainly," Helen said; "just take her. She's in the barn."

Helen laid down her work and went directly to assist with the sick man. They put him to bed and propped him up with pillows; but great mouthfuls of blood kept gulping up into the towel that they laid about him and a deathly pallor crept into his face.

When Mary Jane rode into Serrano, Mandy was covered with foam. Half a dozen men relinquished their seats on a drygoods box in front of the grocery store to inquire what was the matter.



"Where is the doctor?" she asked hurriedly, "my father's got a hemm'rage."

"He's in the saloon," answered John Stanford, who happened to be one of the party. "You jest go right home and I'll bring him; my horse and buggy is around the corner."

Mary Jane went back as fast as she had come. Muscle and leanness of bowels, with a girl on her back, made it possible for Mandy to go at a high rate of speed, and long before John Stanford arrived with the doctor Mary Jane was beside her father.

"They're coming," she said, "but they couldn't keep up with Mandy. Can't you tell me how you are?" Then, catching his feeble hand, she pressed it to her cheek. The old man smiled upon her with his patient blue eyes and made an effort to turn upon his side, at which the cloths fell away from his mouth and showed the still oozing blood. Mary Jane groaned at the sight and ran out to the gate. A cloud of dust in the distance told her that help was coming.

When the two men arrived Mary Jane said: "Let me tie your horse and you hurry."

They obeyed. But the vital spark in Burlingham had well nigh fled. During the remaining hours of his life the cold face of his wife became overspread with something akin to motherliness. She made a motion toward her husband as though she would take him in her arms. In a tender voice, she called him "father," and as she beheld him in this new and sacred rôle she poured out upon him the love she had so long withheld. She looked at the great clock,

measuring out the last hours of his life, and, for the first time, realized that with all his feebleness and poverty, he had not missed goodness. His love for his children made of his face as he lay dying a divine altar and drew the lines into correspondence with the harmonies of his nature.

The next morning the news was told in Serrano, and soon a number of men were planning for the funeral. It was agreed that "Doc." Stoner and John Stanford should go over and lay out the dead man.

"And to let folks know that we are a Christian community," said Jack Hamilton, "take him a new silk necktie, and I'll foot the bill, myself."

Especially did the old preacher-justice look upon the matter seriously. "We've got a chance now to show folks what Serrano can do, and if we don't distinguish ourselves, it's our own fault," said he.

When the funeral procession started from the Andrews place next day, it was headed by the justice of the peace, driving a gray mare with a month old colt frisking by her side, while close behind was the grocery wagon, bearing the corpse. Then came John Stanford, with the mourners, in his two-seated buggy, and behind them was Helen with the smaller children. Still further down the line was Benson on his mule, Ulysses, and, last of all, several wagon-loads of Gospel Swampers and ranchers from Los Nietos.

"Somebody ought to have saved a place for us right behind the mourners," complained Mr. King of Los Nietos.

"Somebody's trying to show off," answered Sproule, of the same district. "If the spraying does the business for the trees the way it looks now, we'll have a church of our own before long," he continued. "I knowed soon's I saw the Burlinghams that they was Presbyterians."

It was nine miles to the graveyard and all along the road parties on horseback and parties in vehicles dropped into the procession, until it appeared that Burlingham was the most lamented man in the country.

At the grave, the justice took the rôle of preacher:

"I have seen a good deal of the corpse," said he, "and while he had his weaknesses, being a Presbyterian, as you all know, I think he was a good man. We want nothing but good words in a place like this. It isn't like a court, where you have to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It's the right thing now to overlook all differences of opinion. The deceased has been a pioneer, as you all know, and has moved, little by little, all the way from Kansas; but now he's gone where moving is no more.

"I would speak further about him, but he has only lived in these parts about a year and a half, and, before that, we don't know nothin' about him. It's a great breach in the family circle, though, to have the father taken away. The infirmities of the female mind is such that it needs a man. There are cases that I could mention where biz'ness has been snatched out of its reg'lar channels because there wasn't no man to keep things straight. And I want

to say right here that biz'ness would bog down mighty sudden, if it wasn't for the men."

Thus he rambled on for an hour and then invited the congregation to walk around and take a look at the corpse. All agreed that Burlingham had never looked better in his life.

"That silk tie just suits him," said Jack Hamilton; "the whole thing has been a great success. It's been a Spread Eagle day for Serrano. So many of our corpses get freighted back east that we don't often get a chance to show what kind of folks we are."

Mrs. Burlingham, under the glamor of the occasion, recalled the patience and goodness of her husband, and, with brief ejaculations about the final scenes, concluded that he had taken leave of a state of existence with which he had proven himself singularly incapable of coping, yet was now safe inside the Golden Gate.

Mary Jane, like Rachel weeping for her children, would not be comforted. Her grief cried out eloquently and John Stanford felt the appeal. For days afterwards, her face haunted him. He could see her as she rode, pell-mell, into Serrano after the doctor and could hear her voice as she uttered her pathetic:—"Dear old, sweet old, pap;" and as he rode toward the Andrews place on Sundays to see how things were going with the family, a fateful spirit seemed to wait for him and tempt him with visions of home and children.

Helen was the first to notice that a subtle bond had sprung up between the two young people, and

now that the gods seemed to be working to bring them together, she felt that she might assist. She arranged rides into town when the seating capacity of the carriage was limited to two; and invented occasions when John's assistance was needed with the branding or the shearing; and soon love, proverbially so shy and timid, peeped in at the windows and around the corners of the old adobé.

## CHAPTER XVI

AFTER the death of the Mexican woman, Mark Watkins went to his bed hoping to rest, and regain his equilibrium within a few days; but his hurt was too deep to be so easily healed. His appetite was gone, his head throbbed, and, on Wednesday, he sent for his brother, who was a physician.

Dr. Mathew Watkins like his brother was a man of more than average ability, and like his brother he was an enthusiast about his chosen profession. Everything from a bread pill to a dose of calomel he administered with certitude and assurance. But his knowledge was of the body and not of the mind. Although he had made long and patient excursions into anatomy, he had not discovered the secret of sorrow or of mental distress. In the dissecting room he walked round and round a cadaver, lifting a bone here and a muscle there, but the mysterious lash that cuts deep into the soul he had failed utterly to find. Such knowledge as he had, however, he brought lovingly to the bed-side of his brother.

"Hello! Mark, you look sick," he said as he broke into the room.

"I am not sick; I am tired of life," said Mark Watkins.

This answer hurt the doctor. He went forward with a quick generous movement and taking the



hand that lay weakly on the bed, said: "Tell me what has happened. There is something wrong."

"Yes," returned the sick man, "there is something too distressing to be put into words."

"But you must tell me. I have a right to know. What is brotherhood, if it does not give us the right to share each other's woes?"

"Well, Matt," the lawyer answered with heart-breaking emotion, "it seems that I have been foolishly fiddling while Rome was burning. It seems to me, now, that Satan tempted me and I fell."

"This is nervous prostration. You need a tonic. You must not swing back to our father's doctrine of total depravity."

"I am afraid I have already proven the old doctrine to be true," said the lawyer. "If two and two make four, I have missed my way. The only thing, now, is to wait and see if the gods, if there be any, will give a sign."

The doctor did not quite understand. Religion, with both men, had long been a thing of the past. To work and to win; to get money and to use it; to keep the head well up, was the only rule either of them had pretended to follow. Mark was the brilliant one of the family. He had won a larger proportion of his cases than any other man at the local bar, and in society he was welcomed wherever he pleased to go. This seemed to the doctor all that a reasonable man should ask.

"You cannot judge of yourself," he said. "You must stop work for awhile."

"Your diagnosis is not correct," returned his

brother. "I think I can gauge the quality of my doings fairly well, and I begin to see that I have left a blister on the fair face of the earth, whereas I should have helped to keep it beautiful. And do you know I blame our pious old father for it. He never taught us anything concerning the tormenting riddle of sex."

Dr. Watkins gasped for breath. "You cannot, you must not speak so," he said.

"Perhaps it seems cruel, but you know as well as I do that we never had any training concerning the things that make for abstemiousness. And we were no exception to the rule. I have listened to the testimony in divorce cases enough to know that. The greater part of family trouble comes from ignorance of the laws that govern parenthood. Every where we look there are homes destroyed and diseases engendered by this vice. Do you not find it so in your practice?"

The doctor felt the force of his brother's logic; but he made no reply, and the lawyer continued,

"As animals, we lived through it, but as men and women of a higher development, we must find some other way."

"In your present condition, you cannot judge for yourself," repeated the doctor soothingly. "I will prescribe for you, and in a few days you will feel better."

"I think I can judge and I am sure my doings have been somewhat like those of an anthropoid ape."

"If you are making specific charges against your-

self, tell me plainly what they are. I can help you better if I know the worst."

"They are simply that I have followed the dictates of my appetites, and never saw, until it was too late whither they were leading me. I have defended men for burglary and arson, whose crimes were white beside mine. I am sure you know the Mexican woman and her little Luisa. All who visit the lower part of town know them. Well, the woman is dead, and the child — is mine. Luisa, and probably others in the same locality, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. You have no medicine for such cases, have you? What is more, my mind, good as it was, reels under the strain."

Dr. Watkins was astonished at his brother's confession. He had had a good deal of experience with women himself; more, perhaps, than was creditable to him, but he had never arrived at such a distracting climax. Therefore it seemed to him that his respected brother had either gone mad, or that he was in need of a wife.

A baffling phase of the case was the fact that his brother had developed one of those old-fashioned changes of heart, that his father would have named conversion, with the difference, however, that conversion, as he remembered it, had meant the observance of certain rules of faith, while his brother was concerned about duty; even his duty to his illegitimate offspring. The physician knew too much to deny that his brother's charges against their father were true. He could remember his mother as a beautiful woman with a worn and weary look

in her face. In his earlier life he had never tried to ascertain what that look meant, but now the problem was before him and it shocked him through and through; but still he had no better advice to offer his brother than to marry and drag another woman down as their mother had been dragged down.

"I have thought about marriage," answered Mark Watkins, "but dare I take a wife and compel her to stand by my side, a victim to my appetites? Tell me! Oh tell me, is there no enchanted path where both men and women may gain the mastery over their passions?"

"Your question is a very great one. It has puzzled wiser heads than ours," replied the doctor.

"Until recently, I had hoped to ask Helen Andrews to marry me; but, since the Mexican woman's death, my children have laid violent hands upon me, and their claims are too strong to be denied. To Luisa and others, equally mine, I must give the remainder of my life, and close the case with an appeal to the Great Judge for mercy."

Dr. Watkins now really thought that his brother had gone mad. He could quite understand that the religious zeal of the father might appear in the son in some form or other; but it seemed to have passed the bounds of sanity when it drove him to lay aside self and journey down to Los Angeles street, seeking for his illegitimate children. Strong emotion was working in his face when he again turned and said:—

"You are taking too serious a view of your trouble."

"No, no!" said the lawyer with emotion. "If I am in the world only to increase its sorrows and to add to its turmoil, I see no reason for remaining in it."

For the first time in their lives the two brothers were at their wits end, the doctor still trying to utilize his medical knowledge, the lawyer groping painfully for higher ground.

In the long silence that followed, Dr. Watkins began to question his skill, began to see that there were things beyond the scope of scientific demonstration. The fog hung like a curtain of crape against the windows of the room where the brothers sat; but through the gloom they could hear a preacher shouting salvation from the curb-stone.

"Let them sing and pray," said the lawyer. "Perhaps they have found the jewel that we have lost."

"Yes," admitted the doctor; "perhaps we have been too much absorbed in material things. Perhaps there is some psychological explanation of sex that we have missed."

When Dr. Watkins returned to his office, some hours later, he felt as though he had been standing over the operating table, with a patient before him who was not likely to pull through. He was fond of his brother; they had worked hard together as young men, had helped each other through college, and were now the only survivors of a father who had bestowed upon them as an inheritance a creed but no tangible science of life. Up to the present time Dr. Watkins had contented himself with keep-



ing his patients alive to the last moment by studying them and experimenting upon them, and after they were dead, ransacking their bodies for secrets that had eluded him in life. But now at the bedside of his brother, he began to realize that there were mysteries entirely beyond his reach.

He had expected Mark to show signs of fear at the thought of exposure; but nothing of the kind had happened. The lawyer rather seemed persuaded that the whole world ought to know and take notice of his errors. At times, he had seemed almost inspired in his pathetic charges against himself. All the evening the doctor looked eagerly into his books, without finding anything to add to his general knowledge of cases analogous to that of his brother. Every day, for the next week, he visited Mark and prescribed first this, and then that, but finally he gave up and said:—

“We have come to a point where we must learn the meaning of this vice that holds us in its grasp.”

The lawyer quite agreed with him. “Yes, yes,” he said, “we must learn it by heart; we must know every line, every curve, every tone of it, and then, instead of dancing like a bear on a chain, we must compel it to dance to us.”

“Yes; and I begin to see that a great responsibility lies upon medical men. We should teach the young the danger of sapping the best forces of the brain by self-indulgence. Sometimes, in my better hours, I reach toward higher modes of thought. Would to God I could see more deeply!”



## CHAPTER XVII

Sister Simplicitas did a good thing for Holy Church when she undertook to care for the offspring of Mark Watkins. The pay was forthcoming and the end no where in sight. There might be a goodly number yet to come. To be sure her affairs were primarily with souls, but when it came to a question of cash she was quite able to manage; so she made the best bargain she could with the lawyer, and undertook to keep his secrets.

But Sister Dolores had an ear for news, and would know the whys and wherefores of all strange happenings. She put leading questions to good Simplicitas, as a lawyer does to an unwilling witness. Even while the miserere was going up she could conjure up enquiries about affairs that were none of her business.

It happened, one morning, that as the two women met in the nave of the church, Sister Dolores made some inquiries about the child, Luisa, and when told that she was well, followed the subject with, "What think you now of Mark Watkins?"

"I think nothing at all," replied the sweet-faced sister. "All I ask is to stand at the door and serve, leaving the thinking to others."

This answer, together with Sister Simplicitas' formality of manner, should have ended the con-

versation; but Sister Dolores was persistent. She argued that, as a child of the Church, Luisa might to be made to serve their purpose better if they knew more about her. There was always the possibility of dower, and there was always the possibility that, after a few years, the slip of a girl might vow herself to the sisterhood, in which case there would still be the matter of dower. So she followed up her questions by asking:

"How much does the child know about herself? Did she see her mother die? Did she ever mention any father, cousins, aunts, friends?"

"She talks very little about her past. She has never said the word 'father,' but she remembers an uncle who took her once to a sheep camp. As I brought her asleep from the house where her mother lay dead, I presume she knows very little about that. But I prefer to explain what I know to Father Tomás," and waving Sister Dolores aside, she proceeded to the dormitory.

This conversation, however, cut Sister Simplicitas deeply. She did her best to benefit Holy Church, and she loved her work; but her desire was to be let alone. Sister Dolores always made her uncomfortable when she tried to drag out of her the gossip of everyday life. If anyone must compel her to speak, let it be Father Tomás; she feared not so much from him in matters of privacy, as she did from Sister Dolores. Father Tomás had a way of saying, "Love God, my children, and keep the heart free from inquisitiveness," which inspired her to confide in him.

With these thoughts running through her head, she dressed little Luisa and took her down with the other children to get breakfast. An hour later, she went to the priest's house with a message for him and there again encountered Sister Dolores in close conversation with Father Vicente. The good father requested Sister Simplicitas to join them, and, after a few moments of beating about the bush, asked for the whole story of Luisa.

It was an awkward moment for Sister Simplicitas, but she found that Sister Dolores by patching and piecing had already made out that a pretty Mexican girl had been provided for by Mark Watkins, with the loss, however, of her personal liberty. The sister told how the girl had accepted the conditions, and, being a simple, ignorant child, had had no notion of what would follow, but after a time, Luisa had followed, and later, poverty, and still later knowledge of the world where women sell their souls. After this recital Sister Dolores looked at Sister Simplicitas with the air of a victor.

"But," Sister Simplicitas answered, "this cannot affect the child. All are alike in Holy Church," and then passages of Scripture about Mary Magdalene gushed from her lips. The Scripture, however, was not what Sister Dolores wanted. She liked better the details of the sad story.

Sister Simplicitas, however, passed on to the duties of the hour without further remarks.

So far, Luisa had rarely spoken of her home life, but about noon an incident happened which made the sisters think that the child had some gnawing

thoughts of her mother. Luisa was standing with other children, near the gate, listening to the mutter of mass, when a woman approached and clamored for the privilege of holding her in her arms. When once Luisa had yielded to the embrace, the lady asked eagerly for information about her own child.

"My little girl is the same age and has the same hair and eyes that you have," she said, "and I have lost her. Are there other little girls here like you, kept out of sight, shut up in a room somewhere?"

Saying this, she began to weep, which so frightened Luisa that she ran away, crying for Sister Simplicitas.

"Do they keep little girls away from their mamas in the convent?" she asked as soon as she could speak.

The question was not answered; but Sister Simplicitas soothed the child and took her to the kitchen where she was allowed to stay and help prepare the mid-day meal.

But young as she was Luisa was frightened at the conversation she had heard, for she had never been certain whether she herself was lost or found on the eventful night when she had gone to sleep in Mr. Watkin's arms and had awakened in the convent, surrounded by strange children and sisters of charity.

That evening before she went to bed she asked Sister Simplicitas a great many questions about her mother, gaining nothing, however, but that she now belonged to Holy Church, the rest of the talk having to do with study and the saying of prayers. Next

day she again asked concerning her mother and Sister Simplicitas spoke very firmly to her. "You must learn," she said, "to think about the convent. It is the Church that is now both your father and your mother."

At this Luisa sobbed bitterly and Sister Simplicitas seeing how the child grieved, toyed with her straight black hair and finally persuaded her to run out and play with the other children. After this, Luisa's Mexican blood forbade her to ask any more questions, and she became, to all intents and purposes, a child of Holy Church.

Father Vicente, however, wanted a little further information concerning the financial condition of Luisa's relations. If there were any probability that money might be inherited he wanted to know it, not only for the child's sake, but for the sake of Holy Church.

"God's work," he reasoned, "must go on through skilful manipulation of money, and it behooves me to keep an eye in that direction."

Stories concerning the parentage of illegitimate children came to him as naturally as water comes back to the sea, and he knew that he had only to watch and wait.

It chanced not long afterward that a number of sheep-herders, from Los Verdes, came into town to confess their sins and to supply themselves with food and drink. They were gathering at the stations of the cross and praying before the bones of St. Francis, when a man of unusually light skin and large, lustrous eyes, drew off from the rest and approached

the confessional. It happened to be Father Vicente's day in the box, and he asked the sheep-herder what troubled him.

"I accuse myself of drunkenness and of cruelty to a child. When my sister was sick, I took her little Luisa and promised to keep her and be kind to her; but when the drink was on me I whipped her and drove her away. And, oh father! can you lay a ghost? My sister appears to me at night."

The father, liking the smack of a ghost story, said, "Go on, my son, go on."

"In the middle of the night, a tall, thin woman comes to me. She has piercing eyes, and she points with one hand towards Los Angeles, while the other hangs by her side. She looks as white as snow, and all around her something like a thin cloud falls down. Once I threw a shoe at her and the head dropped off. Then she laughed. Another time she spoke, yes, father, she spoke very plainly, and I was frightened, and got out of bed and ran away out of the house."

When the story of the ghost was all told, the penitent concluded by saying, "I am a poor man, but I can work. Absolve me, good padre, and I will go back to my flocks and will bring much money for the saying of masses for my poor sister's soul and for the support of the child."

Father Vicente now knew that he had taken up the thread of Luisa's story, and, still having an eye to the finances of the Church, he asked, "Do you know where the child is that your sister left?"

The sheep-herder replied that he did not.



"Do you know who is the father of the child?"

"Yes," the man answered with bitterness, "the American lawyer, Mark Watkins. I saw him through the window the night my sister died. He stood by her bed and held the child in his arms and I had my hand on a knife and meant to kill him; but he saw me and I ran away. In my heart, I still have the desire to kill him!"

"Pray daily for grace to overcome this," said the priest. "It is a great sin to feel revenge in the heart. And leave the child to Holy Church. She is in good hands. Go in peace!"

The penitent was greatly relieved. To be absolved without having the care of his sister's child laid upon him, and to know that the ghost would no more trouble him at night, was more than he had dared hope for. Father Vicente had, indeed, given him happiness. A new light shone in his eyes. He straightened up, thought of the dogs he had left alone all day with the sheep, thought of the bear skin that was drying in the sun, and then bethinking himself of his thirst, slid away to the pulqueria.

He had good manners, this son of the open air, and he bowed diplomatically low to the round-bellied Mexican in charge, and, throwing a four-bit piece on the counter he took the gourd and drank and drank again.

Under the influence of the sparkling draught the herder grew liberal and called his friend Moreno, who chanced to be passing. "Sacramento," said he, "it is good!" Moreno quite agreed with him and agreed also that the dogs were able to keep the sheep

together while their masters took a rest. It was so good to see the lights and hear the music of the city, and the wooden tub was still half-full of the juice.

It was late when Father Vicente chanced to pass from the church to the cathedral and saw the herders horses still tied before the pulqueria. "Of a certainty," he said, "Luisa has no prospect of dower from her mother's side, but a considerable assurance of support from Mark Watkins."

For a month, no further thought was given to the little girl. Beyond a shrewd guess or two, her parentage was unknown, except to the few. The kind-hearted Father Tomás prayed daily that the great transforming power of the church, which could change a Magdalene to a Madonna, might protect the child, and the ripple occasioned by Luisa's advent was fast fading out.

But, alas, about this time Sister Simplicitas appeared on the scene with another child in her arms. This one had eyes of heavenly blue and hair of the softest curling yellow. Any information concerning her, Sister Simplicitas refused to give. Taking her cue from her experience with Luisa, she was positively dumb in the case of the blue-eyed one. This conduct set Sister Dolores off on another mysterious errand of investigation, which ended in much talk, and, by the end of a week, gossip was at its best again. Stories in which the heroine loved the villain flashed from ear to ear with feminine unscrupulousness.

Under the strain of cross-examination good father

Tomás admitted that there might be a resemblance between Luisa and the blue eyed one, but narrowed the way down to an end of the conversation by saying that the affair was not within his jurisdiction.

## CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN Mary Jane married John Stanford, there was rejoicing in the Burlingham family. All her life that patient girl had lived under the shadow of a mover's wagon; and now to have a home, a home of her own, was a new and delightful experience, while Mrs. Burlingham looked upon it as a sudden rise to opulence.

Not much did she know about John Stanford and his ways; not much did she care, since one thing was certain — he was not a mover.

His father had preëmpted the quarter section, twenty years before, and on his death he had passed it on to his son. That fact was sufficient. True, some of the land was too steep and stony for the plow, and some of it was dead-white sand; but on the higher levels were filaria and greasewood and plenty of bee feed. John Stanford confidently believed that if he held it for another twenty years, the rise in values would make him a rich man. The fool's errand of waiting for wealth did not, in the least, disturb him, nor did it occur to Mary Jane.

As she saw the happiness of her daughter, Mrs. Burlingham looked upon Mary Jane as having been raised up by the Lord to lift the family out of poverty.

There was no great grief for the dead Mr. Burlingham, but, as time went on, she thought of his

virtues and saw them reflected in Mary Jane. Slowly, his patience, his long suffering, his love for his children, came to be remembered, and, slowly, she saw that Mary Jane had put a truer estimate upon his character than she herself had done. Under the influence of plenty she began to appreciate the part that Helen Andrews had acted toward her children, and to understand that neither the sins of omission nor of commission had prevented that noble girl from keeping an eye single to their welfare. She began to perceive that, without the slightest odor of sanctity, Helen had done a work for the family that time could not efface. These things she pondered over, as she sat among the geraniums at the back door of her new home, and slowly drifted toward the great truths of existence.

As for Helen, when she found herself alone in the old adobe, she realized that she could not go on without human companionship. The never-ceasing marvel of love in her heart cried out for children. The divine look of motherhood had already crept into her face and set its stamp upon her shining hair. The society of animals which had always given Helen so much pleasure now appealed to her with double force. A cry from any thing and she ran with tender hands softly to touch the hurt. She seemed to send out vibrations, which brought out suffering creatures, as she took her walks. From a mouse being tortured by a cat, to a horse with a collar-worn neck, she looked with unfailing sympathy and seemed to know, as with some clairvoyant sense, what they were trying to say. The hungry coyote

yelped close to her house, and the rabbits chased through the orchard, but she laid no plans for their destruction.

The neighbors, now began to look upon her as having settled into a recluse life, with eccentricities bordering upon lunacy, and an incident which occurred while she was alone confirmed them in this opinion.

Poor Mandy Jones, the little bronco who knew the tricks of the desert, knew the mirage, knew quicksand and the smell of water from afar, fell a victim to just a common wildcat. He jumped upon her back as she was nibbling under a sycamore tree and with teeth and claws cut deep gashes along her spine and down her flanks, and Mandy, having the ancestry that never forgets the leap, the snarl, the clutch of the mountain lion, dropped dead with fright. It was easy to see that the wounds were not deep enough to kill her; but the shock stopped her heart.

When Helen learned of the fact, she had the body of the pony brought to the little graveyard and buried there beside her parents and old Joe. To those who did not understand her, this act was sacrilege. The good people of the community, after due consultation, decided that she could not be in her right mind, and gossip was in every house for miles round.

"Well, I don't know jest what to think," said Jim Baker to a neighbor who had called to hear the news. "I bought a heifer from her a little while ago and she acted all right. She owned up



in the start that she didn't know anything about the critter and said if it kicked I could bring it back, and it did kick, and I brung it back and got my money again all right. But I don't know as that proves anything. You know what the Bible says about wimmin, and I always thought there would be wailing and gnashing of teeth fer them as tries to do biz'ness without a man."

"Oh you, Jim, shut up!" exclaimed a voice from the kitchen. "You can't talk without making yourself appear an idiot."

The old man took on a look of maudlin surprise. The near proximity of his wife startled him like a thunderclap out of a clear sky. He took off his hat and gazed into it, as though the muddle into which his loquacity had brought him might have originated in its crown; then, replacing it, he moved out towards the gate.

It happened that John Stanford was passing, and it being generally understood that he was an authority on all matters pertaining to Helen, he was stopped and asked for information.

"Of course, you have heard about that Andrews girl burying her horse in the graveyard?" began the old man. "Now, what kind of a lunatic is she, anyhow?"

"That's too many fer me," replied Stanford. "I've had a good many shots at her, one time and another, but I don't pretend to understand her."

"What does Billy say?" enquired the old man.

"Just what I do; that some days she acts queer; and then again she's all right."

"Some day she'll get a man that'll make her behave," observed the old man.

"She ain't a-going to get no chance, as I can see," returned the one-time admirer of Helen. "She's so durned sot in her ways that nobody would want her!"

Jim Baker's face quivered into a smile. As a bearer of news, he could now return to the house and feel sure of his wife's greeting. He said "adios" to his neighbor, and, hearing the rattle of dishes, moved toward the kitchen.

"Suppose you take this bucket and get me some water," his wife said as she saw him coming. He started to obey her, but seeing Stanford in the distance she countermanded the order and said:—

"Never mind, pa, come and eat your dinner," then added encouragingly, "I suppose John Stanford had heard all about the horse being buried in the graveyard?"

"Of course," replied her husband.

"Well, what does he think? Will they do anything to her for it?"

"I don't know, if somebody would put the law onto her, they might, I think she's 'looney.' It's this way, a woman ain't got no biz'ness with a horse, nohow."

"You ain't got no right to talk that way about wimmen!"

The old man put on his hat again and shuffled off toward the barn. His wife looked after him with a perplexed expression and said aloud to herself:—

"Looney! Well, maybe she is. I don't know!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

SOME weeks after the burial of Mandy Jones, Helen received notice that the probate court had, at last, reached her case and that it would come up for final settlement on the twenty-seventh day of the month.

How long it would take to close up the business, she had not the least idea, but she made arrangements to go into town and remain as long as was necessary. To this end, she wrote Mrs. Parker and that good lady, being still in need of funds, replied immediately that she had placed at Helen's disposal the best suite of rooms in her house.

The middle of the week found Helen again in town, with no definite plan except to stay until the probate case was settled. Mrs. Parker was very enthusiastic in her greeting. She kissed Helen on both cheeks and declared that she had been fearfully disappointed at not seeing more of her. She had such oceans to tell her; how Mrs. So and So had done this, and that; and how Margaret was in jail for shooting a man who had insulted her, and, finally, with a little hint of something mysterious, how Mr. Watkins was not so popular as he had once been.

"But tell me about Margaret," Helen cried, "I should like to help her. She was a very good woman was she not?"

"Yes, but she had a bad temper," answered Mrs. Parker, "and I should not care to befriend her."

"As I remember she was extremely sensitive about her virtue. I have heard her say she would kill the man who insulted her. It is an old Scotch idea, and while I deplore her act I can quite understand that she felt justified," replied Helen.

"It is one of those cases where women can do nothing," replied Mrs. Parker. "You would not wish to be seen in court with her I am sure."

"I do not feel afraid to offer my services to a woman in trouble," answered Helen. "It may be the very best way we can serve the community in which we live."

"But it might make talk."

"Neither do I care anything about the talk," replied Helen.

They seated themselves in the parlor and Mrs. Parker's conversation flowed on for an hour without arousing in Helen anything but a confirmation of its weakness. "The same old story over again," thought Helen as she went to her room. "The same lack of human feeling. The same pretentiousness. The same trifling conversation."

In the evening, Mr. Watkins called to explain to Helen the situation of her affairs in court.

"There is a murder case on now, but when that is done, I see no reason for further delay of your case," he said.

"Is it the trial of Margaret West?" inquired Helen.

"Yes, that same woman who was here as a servant when you first came to Buena Vista."

"Tell me about it," said Helen; "may I not sit beside the poor woman in the court room and comfort her a little?"

"There is need of good women to console persons on trial, and sometimes great assistance can be rendered them; but it should be some older and more experienced person than yourself," he replied.

Helen was not to be put off thus. She urged that she was sure Margaret would remember her and be glad to see her.

Mrs. Parker again expressed her disapproval: "So far as I can see, it would be in very bad taste for a young woman like you to appear in court."

The attorney, seeing that Helen took far higher ground than Mrs. Parker or himself, changed the subject and began to discuss the probate case, asking whether she could swear that her accounts were correct, whether she could remember certain dates, and whether she knew where her boundary line was located.

This last question was put so slyly that Helen laughed outright.

"Oh, that—I can never forget!"

The effect of her rippling laugh was to make Mark Watkins feel somewhat like a rope-dancer who dare not cast his eyes downward for fear of giddiness. He began to wonder within himself whether he should be able to conduct this delicate business to an end without losing his heart. There were questions to be asked in court that might seem cruel.

How would it do to ask Helen whether her father had any other heirs beside herself.

His own experience had taught him that there were skeletons in the closets of some people, and he thought it a pity to try to drag out on the witness stand anything that Helen might wish to conceal — all of which the girl, having no skeletons to hide, failed utterly to see. At last, Mr. Watkins, with the idea of appearing supremely indifferent handed her a bill of costs which Helen accepted with indifference.

Notwithstanding their business-like demeanor, the lawyer was conscious of every inflection in Helen's voice and every change in the color of her cheeks. It was fortunate that Mrs. Parker staid in the room and kept up her worldly-wise conversation, putting out by its very feebleness all the fire that lay smouldering between the couple.

At last, the business of the evening was finished and the case of the Public Administrator *vs.* the estate of William Andrews was ready for the ponderous machinery of the court — no obstacle remaining except the closing of the criminal case against Margaret.

After the lawyer had left the two women alone, Mrs. Parker felt called upon to inform the girl still further about Mark Watkins' evil reputation.

"They have found two of his illegitimate children," she told her, "and people think there is another, and they say that both the lawyer and his brother are in great trouble over the matter."

"I hope they will find them all," answered Helen,



"it seems a noble thing for him to keep his children together and take care of them."

"Oh, but you do not understand child! It is such a shock to society."

At this, Helen said haughtily, "Society is dancing over the deepest and darkest problems of life with the foolish curse of inadequacy upon it. It lies abed too late in the morning. It is unloving and unkind. It has not charity. It tells lies."

After this storm Helen retired to her chamber and when she went to bed, dreamed bad dreams. She thought that a tidal wave came in and drove a great ship upon the rocks and that over the roar of the breakers she could hear the cry of Margaret. In the morning she felt tired and ill but she dressed herself neatly and by half-past ten walked into the court room and took a seat beside the unfortunate woman.

As she sat down and put one hand lovingly on Margaret's arm, Mr. Watkins became more than ever aware of the strong personality of the girl.

It seemed to him that she radiated a light hitherto unknown in his experience with women.

For four days Helen sat beside Margaret and listened to the testimony in the murder case and on the fifth day heard Mr. Watkins' eloquent plea for his client. All that was possible to say in her defense, Mr. Watkins said. But the stinging charges of the prosecuting attorney and the fact that Margaret showed no signs of repentance clung to the mind of the jury, and after being out all night they brought in a verdict of guilty.

## CHAPTER XX

ON the morning of December first, Helen found herself in possession of her father's estate, with no further hindrance in the way of transacting her own business. The God of prosperity had been good to her; the property had increased in value; no disease had broken out among the stock, and there was plenty of feed upon the range.

After the order of the court had been entered, there was a little explanation of obscure points, a little counting up of costs, an exuberance of congratulations, and then no more of the case of the Public Administrator *vs.* the estate of William Andrews.

But, by a strange providence, just as Helen thought that she was through with law and lawyers, Margaret's case seemed to come into her keeping. The frightful predicament into which the poor woman had fallen made Helen feel that she could not return to the ranch without doing something to help her unfortunate friend. There seemed, however, to be no way to proceed except to go back to the office of Mr. Watkins and ask for advice.

As Helen went up the stairs that led to his office, she felt a little timid lest her disregard for his advice in attending Margaret's trial should cause him to refuse his assistance. But, when she entered the room and felt the steady clasp of his hand, she

was glad that she had had the courage to follow her own conviction in the matter.

"I have come," she said, "to see if anything can be done for poor Margaret?"

"Oh, yes, there is enough to be done; a lawyer is never at the end of his resources," he replied.

She smiled a little mischievously. "Not even when his client assumes the management of the case?"

"They often do that," he said, "but it is seldom that they succeed as well as you did."

"I feel like trying it again," replied Helen. "What can we do for the poor woman?"

Mr. Watkins suggested a new trial, weeks and months of delay, a change of venue, popular sentiment to be manufactured, and so on.

"I did not realize how much could be done," interrupted Helen.

After a little consideration, the lawyer resumed: "Probably the most practical thing is to get her out of jail on bail, and then apply for a new trial."

"Tell me about bail; can a woman sign a bail-bond?"

"Yes. But Margaret might run away, and in that case you would lose the amount of the bond."

"Oh, no," interrupted Helen, "Margaret would not do that. I should love her and comfort her and that would make it impossible for her to run away. Many a time I have tamed wild things; why can I not tame a woman?"

The great depths of thought which Helen unconsciously touched in this conversation appeared to

the lawyer as the key to many doors that he, in his life-work, had not been able to unlock. The thought seemed to fill him once more with the madness of worship for Helen. It was some moments before he spoke, but he finally said, "The bond requires two signatures."

Helen dropped her eyes, and he thought that she expressed disappointment.

"Shall I sign it with you?" he asked.

Helen looked at him more searchingly than she had ever done before. His whole figure seemed imbued with a sort of nobility. Whatever he might have done in the past, she saw that he was not the wreck of unruly passions that Mrs. Parker had represented him to be. While these thoughts were running through her mind, the lawyer had opened a drawer, taken out a blank bail-bond and was carefully filling in the spaces. Then, taking his hat, he said:

"I cannot go further without ascertaining the amount to be inserted. If the judge fixes a reasonable sum, I will advise you to sign it and I will sign it myself. If not, there are other ways to proceed."

He went out, and Helen took up a paper and tried to read; but she was too filled with conflicting thoughts to keep her mind on the pages, so she laid the sheet aside and waited with folded hands.

The judge proved to be lenient and fixed the bond at two thousand dollars, which was easily within reach of both Helen and the lawyer.

"What next?" he asked, when both had signed

the document. "I suppose you will take your protégé to the ranch and leave me to work out the details."

"Yes," Helen returned; "by this time there are many things waiting my attention."

"But bail-bonds need looking after," said Mark Watkins. "When may I come out to see whether Margaret has run away and forfeited the money?"

"Oh, any time. We country people make no ceremony about days at home. We are always at home, except when we go out, and then we expect our guests to put their horses in the barn and wait for us."

"Yes, I remember."

Mr. Watkins now began to understand what it meant to deal with a woman on terms of perfect equality. All the little nothings that had usually gone to make up conversation with the fair sex he abandoned and treated Helen as he would have treated a man whom he respected. In no other way could she understand; in no other way was he willing to talk to her.

After a little further conversation, in which he explained to her the risks and duties of a bondsman, they walked together to the jail. Both looked precisely what they were. Any judge of human nature could see that they stood out boldly among men as one couple in a thousand.

She walked by his side with a cloud-like beauty about her head that caused every one to brighten as she passed; he strode like a master workman who compels things to come his way.

When they reached the jail, they found Margaret broken and discouraged. Being fully persuaded that she was justified in what she had done, she could not understand why she had not been acquitted.

Helen embraced the woman as a mother embraces her own, and said:

“I have come for you. You shall go with me to the ranch and begin life over again. With nature and the animals, we can live and forget this frightful ordeal. Everything in the country makes for peace. People are not so painfully respectable as they are in town, nor so cruel. There we will be a law unto ourselves, with you and I as judge and jury.”

Then, turning to Mr. Watkins, she asked, half-ironically, “Would not a richer woman have been acquitted for doing what Margaret did?”

The lawyer did not answer; but, turning to Margaret, explained what had been done for her and assured her that there was still hope.

Margaret interrupted him with her sobs. When she was sufficiently calm, he put Helen and her charge into a closed carriage and drove with them to the depot.

As the train rolled away, heaven came very near to both women. The lover of humanity was in heaven, because she loved; the torn and tortured one, because she was the recipient of that love. There was no failure of the balance, everything was proving true, as Helen had guessed it would when



she had pondered so lovingly upon the poor woman's trouble.

Mark Watkins went back to his office and thought long over the events of the morning. Much as he believed in the basic principles of law, he now began doubting its practical application to the every-day events of life. Helen's question "Would not a richer woman than Margaret have been acquitted?" stung him. He felt strangely moved to hear the honor of his profession questioned by a mere girl; yet he could not conceal from himself the fact that there had been something like a failure of justice in Margaret's case.

The frame of mind in which he found himself was not conducive to work, so he laid aside a pile of documents that he was working on, and, taking his hat, walked over to his brother's office. Finding no patients there, after a few preliminary remarks, he launched out on the subject nearest his heart.

"There are problems in life that you and I have missed, Matt.— problems that, with all our learning, we do not understand as well as that slip of a girl from the country."

"Yes?" the doctor asked curiously, "what are they?"

"I begin to think they have to do with just simple love! I begin to think that Miss Andrews has transmuted that, which in the grosser form is sex-love, into its prototype, love for humanity, and that she practices law and medicine and everything better than we do. If this be true she is *avant* courier of

a new era. An era when all the demons that we know now will hide themselves in shame."

After a long pause he continued thoughtfully: "It seems to me that there is a realm in which all our intellectual training is no better than the cunning of a fox."

"I am coming around to something like that opinion myself," replied the doctor, "yet I fear that our civilization is far from being able to put it in practice."

"Perhaps so, but it is encouraging that we have one case. Helen does things out of the sheer love of doing them, while I quote law and precedent, and draw ponderously correct papers, only to accomplish a failure of justice."

For a long time the two men were silent; then the doctor said:

"If Miss Andrews lives in a world so far removed from ours, you would hardly risk marrying her, would you?"

"Not unless I can see farther than I do now into her philosophy of thought. Tell me, do you think it possible for men to establish relationships with women that shall be unmixed with desire?"

"India has idols representing these high ideals, and her poets and philosophers have always kept such a millennium in view. But we are the product of a training so different from theirs, that I hardly dare say what could be done," said the doctor.

"I begin to realize that all the heavens and all the hells of human existence are found in the laws

that govern the association of men and women," continued the lawyer.

"Yes," replied his brother. "Physicians, more than any one else, are conscious of the forces that scatter mental and physical uncleanness through the body, but they have not seen the importance of advising their patients. Perhaps we are as guilty of the sin of omission as our father was."

Thus did the brothers suffer for their sins. Thus did they grope toward higher levels of thought.

## CHAPTER XXI

THE arid season was at its height when Helen and Margaret arrived at the ranch. The atmosphere seemed one all-embracing sea of evanescent color, into which Margaret gazed questioningly, as though she feared that it might, at any moment, turn to ashes.

The roomy old house, the wide veranda, where more or less of animal life was always resting peacefully; and, above all, the presiding genius of Helen, made Margaret feel as though she were in some enchanted dream.

"I am in heaven," she said to Helen one day, "and trying to make myself believe that it will last."

Helen saw and understood. Better than the judge — better than the jury, did this simple country girl see and know how to deal with the case she had in hand. The experiences of the trial had driven the last vestige of belief in God from Margaret's heart, but when Helen, tripping lightly, with no cumbersome theories about sin or crime, reached out her hand, — lo! — salvation began.

"It is only when I think of the injustice of that awful prosecuting attorney that I feel an almost uncontrollable bitterness. It is then that I am doubt-

ful whether I can keep revenge from creeping into my heart."

"Forget it all," Helen returned. "Wipe out the whole past; begin anew. Life is worth living, and the world has need of those who have suffered."

"Your goodness, alone, will help me to try," began Margaret.

"No, no. Do not make that mistake. You have not begun to think how great you are! You have not realized that you are here by divine appointment. Look upon the trial as an educator and try to find its meaning."

"I can never understand all you say. No one has ever spoken like this to me before," Margaret answered.

"Let me tell you how to understand. Begin to-day to do all in your power for those who suffer, and by this, I mean, for suffering animals as well as for suffering people. Let me be your doctor and prescribe for you. Every step you take, you will find applicants for your good offices. Minister to them. At this very moment there is a tortured creature in the corral, waiting for us to come and do what we can for its relief. Wherever we go, there is something needing us; something looking to us for help. I even go further, and promise you that your joy will be all the more for having had to do with evil. Anger, revenge, and crime, are the materials out of which come our greatest achievements. They become our crown of glory, when they are deprived of their sting."

"Now, I begin to see," said Margaret, "and I

shall try every day to find something that needs me, even as I need you."

"That is the new religion," said Helen; "let us try for it."

They joined hands and with cloths and basins went to that part of the barn which had come to be called the "hospital." There they found a colt that had been frightfully cut by the cruel barbed wire. After a hard hour's work they left the animal somewhat relieved.

As they moved away there came around the nostrils and lips of the poor creature a dozen soft lines.

"See," said Helen; "he would speak to us if he could."

As Margaret looked back a little whinny came from the colt, and Helen, turning, put her hand on its soft nose and said:

"Yes. I understand you. Gratitude is in every creature; animals as well as human beings are possessed of it."

"Do you really believe he understands?" said Margaret.

"I know it. I have lived too long with animals not to know their language."

"It makes me feel a responsibility that I never felt before," said Margaret.

"That is a true psychological growth," replied Helen. "To feel our responsibility toward everything that has life and to act accordingly is to come very near to God."

They passed on to a hen with a dozen newly hatched chickens, Margaret taking the fluffy little



balls tenderly against her cheek. Helen noticed this act and seeing how the mother instinct was growing put into Margaret's hand the things that needed the tenderest care.

It was not long, of course, before Mark Watkins grew anxious about the bail-bond and again came out to the ranch to see in person that Margaret had not run away. The ranch seemed to him such a fit place for watching over a bail-bond, especially as a preacher of newer and nobler ideas was there, a preacher who was young and beautiful, as well as wise!

When he arrived Helen was in the orchard. He saw her leaning gracefully against a tree. Her eyes were closed and she seemed listening to the song of a bird. As he walked toward her there came over him the mystic spell which love and untrammelled space beget. Far out in the great quivering distance he seemed to hear voices and to catch glimpses of an army with banners. He moved slowly. Perhaps it were sacrilege to break the charm; but Helen heard him and coming forward with a quick, impulsive greeting said:

"I am glad you came. There is something very clear and vibrant in the air to-day."

"Yes. I heard snatches of your desert music as I came down the path."

"How beautiful! The wild trumpeter does not give out his song to ears that are not ready to hear!"

It was the first compliment Helen had ever vouchsafed him, and it filled his soul with hope; but he

had to feel his way into her world very slowly; for he now fully understood that any love between them must be of the soul.

"It is not in the nature of things that you should love me," he said as they stood beneath the tree. "I dare not tell you how I have lived, or what my life has been; but you must have understood that before I met you, the sins that tempted me I committed. I have always had high ideals; but I could not reach them, and, in my fallen condition, I brought burdens upon myself that I cannot now shake off — burdens that perhaps ought to prevent me from saying to you what I should like to say."

Helen listened in silence; but there was interest and sympathy in her eyes, and he continued:

"It is a great thing that I am able to confess my sins to a pure woman. It gives me courage to go back to my work, with the past behind me, and such salvation as comes from repentance ahead of me. I am only just beginning to understand that a man's character is his fate."

There was unspeakable grandeur in his demeanor as he said this; the grandeur of a storm at sea, through which is breaking the calm of a quiet sunset. Helen saw it and drank in his words as the thirsty landscape drinks in the beating rain. She did not consider; she did not weigh; but she noticed the restless motions of his well-shaped hands and the nervous twitching of his mouth, and thought the whole personality and individuality of him adorable. Her love had little to do with reason. It was something that lay away back, in the essence of her

nature. It could not express itself in words, but sat long in silent meditation.

At last, he looked at his watch and said, "I have staid too long. The train will soon be due, and I must be in town to-night."

Then, saying good-bye, he turned hurriedly into the path that led past the graves to the little station. Luckily the sage and greasewood wrapped him close, else he might have turned back, and, like a man lost on the desert, moved in a circle until he came around to the place from which he started.

He went on, however, formulating sermons in his own mind concerning sin and the forgiveness of sin, and wrath laid up against a day of wrath; while interwoven with every thought was the conviction that, of a certainty, virtue is adorable and vice damnable.

## CHAPTER XXII

As Mark Watkins wound in and out through the chaparral, he alarmed a flock of quail which rose, with a whirr of the wings, only to drop again into an open space beyond. The birds had hardly alighted, when a shot rang out and echoed against the mountain side. Instantly a man came stealthily from behind a point of rock, gathered up two or three wounded birds, and returned to a place where a little smoke was rising through the brush.

The spot was directly behind the little station, and Mark Watkins strolled over, expecting to find some cowboy, in search of stock, or a sheep-herder, passing from one camp to another. Instead, he was surprised to find the man hurriedly re-loading his gun, while, tied to a greasewood root was a pony, which had evidently been driven to the limit of its endurance. The poor animal was drenched with foam, and its sides were cut by the cruel spurs.

The fire was dying down, and the only evidence of food was the quail and an old tomato can, with the odor of coffee steaming from its top.

Mr. Watkins at once suspected that he had surprised a man fleeing from justice; and wishing to try for himself the experiment of Helen's large love for humanity, he spoke as becomes a man to his brother-man:

"Hello, neighbor! Well met in this narrow path."

The man started like a wild animal and put his hand into his hip pocket. Mr. Watkins, still keeping the better side of himself in command, said kindly:

"You need not fear me. I am not an officer; I am only waiting to take the train into town."

Still the man made no answer, but laid the quail upon the dying embers.

"How much further can your horse go?" asked Mr. Watkins.

"He can't make no ten-mile gait no more; but I have friends at the Diamond C ranch that will give me a fresh mount."

The assurance that he was not in the presence of an officer told plainly in the countenance of the outlaw. He looked frankly at his interrogator, and, when the latter asked if they had not met before, answered:

"Yes. I was a witness in the case of Cody *vs.* Kent. Do you remember? You are Mark Watkins and you was attorney for Cody."

"Oh, yes, I remember now. It was about some cattle that were stolen from the Lugo ranch."

The smell of the broiling quail now drew the attention of the hungry man, and he squatted down to turn them over with his jack-knife. Then, straightening up again, he said:

"I worked on the Lugo ranch then; but now the sheriff's after me, and, if he catches me, I s'pose I'll need a lawyer."

"What's the trouble?" Mark Watkins asked.

"Oh, the stage has been held up again over on the Puente road and the signs and signal smokes p'int to me!" The man smiled broadly and non-committally. "You know it's happened such a scandalous number of times that the Wells-Fargo people are getting a tired feeling! So they have offered a big reward."

Mr. Watkins looked straight into the eyes of the man. They were blue, and kindly. "What am I," he thought, "that I should withhold my sympathy from this man? His crimes are against some person's money; mine are against my own flesh and my own offspring."

Then, going still nearer, he took the hand of the highwayman and said, "If you are caught and lodged in jail, send for me. I can, at least, introduce you to some lawyer who will defend you. As for myself, I am taking no more criminal cases."

The man mistook the trend of Mr. Watkins' remark, and said:—"Oh, I have the dough. You need not think I am going to bog down when it comes to money!"

"I am not thinking about the money," replied Mr. Watkins. "I am trying to see things in a new light."

"You don't mean that you are going to turn sky-pilot?" demanded the astonished man.

"No. I am no preacher. But I hope I am man enough to meet a fellow man in trouble without thinking of money."

"Yes, that's the right play to make. But there



ain't many that does it. If there was, we fellows would have to go out of business, for we can't work against a man that's good to us."

This seemed to Mark Watkins quite in accord with Helen's ideas. It seemed to imply a law, by which people might be elevated into something like honesty, without the assistance of courts and lawyers.

The hungry man took the quail from the fire, ate them greedily, and drained the last drop of coffee, before he spoke again.

"I like your talk. There ain't no use denying it—everybody feels ashamed of himself when he goes wrong, but you see, when a man is out of money, he don't generally turn saint."

"No. You are right. Money is the 'root of all evil.'"

"And as fer law," continued the robber philosophically, "it looks as though it had hobbles on it. Like as not the sheriff will pick up some poor devil that's not guilty and clap him into jail, while I run away. You lawyer folks make a heap of mistakes. It's better out on the desert, where we just rope a man and hang him to a cottonwood tree. He don't get so wearied out waiting for his trial!"

The lawyer suppressed a smile as he replied: "Law is not so bad as the administration of law."

The highwayman again looked at his revolver. Having satisfied himself that it was ready for action, and that his belt was full of cartridges, he reached out his hand and said, "Adios, partner! Your talk has done me good. I wasn't expecting it, but it is

the thing, after all, that one gets hungry for." Then, springing into his saddle, he was off.

As Mark Watkins watched his figure disappearing through the sage all the ambitions of his past life seemed to lose color and perspective and fall into a dull, flat background against which humanity stood, hungering for love.

What wireless telepathy had set up between himself and the man who was fleeing from the sheriff, he hardly understood, but, putting two and two together, he seemed to be getting the same results as Helen had, when she took Margaret out of jail. He thought of a little poem that he had read and repeated it:

"Whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him or her I shall follow."

In imagination he saw the highwayman's eyes dilate at the word "neighbor"; he saw the heart, so untouched by fear of pursuit and punishment, trembling in the presence of the "right word"; and he felt that truth might be struck from any flint, if only the right voice came to touch it.

The rumble of the train in the distance broke his reverie. He seized the flag that hung against a post and waved it, and the engineer slowed up sufficiently for him to jump aboard.

When he reached home, Mark Watkins was considerably troubled in his mind as to whether it were not his duty to report what he knew concerning the highwayman to the sheriff's office. To encourage crime was the last thing he desired; but he knew only too well the frightful tyranny of the man-

hunt; the pursuit, the command to "halt," the authority to kill, and the brutalizing effect upon the community of daily reports from the scouting party.

As compared with what he was beginning to realize, the law's treatment of criminals seemed savage and he finally decided to consult with his brother.

Dr. Watkins requested a full account of the interview with the highwayman, and, after learning of the change in the man's countenance, under his brother's neighborly treatment, said:—

"I am beginning to see, myself, that life is not what I thought it was. As we have been living, the greed of gain generates outlawry, even as the serpent's egg generates tooth and fang. As I begin to see, I doubt whether I should report a case of crime. But, dare we tear down our old systems, until we find a better one?"

"For my part," returned the lawyer, "I am not sure but I have found a better one. I am not sure but I shall go out on the desert and live 'with my vision."

The doctor laughed. "What will you do with your clients? They are already beginning to complain of your neglect."

"I presume so. But I am half-minded to turn them all over to Bronson and quit the business! I still believe in the law; but it is a cumbersome old machine that needs much repairing. I cannot, in view of what I know about trials, either accept the reward, or report to the sheriff's office my knowledge of the man who robbed the stage. Neither can I

prosecute other men, while my own sins are red upon my hands."

Here the doctor, although looking very serious, reverted to his former mode of thought and advised his brother to "take a tonic and sleep with his windows open." But a new light shone in the eye of Mark Watkins. He had passed the point in his development where he needed a physician, and he paid not the slightest attention to his brother's opinion. At last, the doctor said:—

"It is an old saying in California that if the true scent of the sage once gets into a man's blood, it will cause him to forget everything else and return to the desert. Perhaps it is the scent of the sage, but more likely it is a woman's face. Either way, it amounts to this—you must use your own judgment, and, as His Honor says, 'May the Lord have mercy on your soul!'"

The pretext of watching over Margaret's bail-bond was getting to be rather an old story, but the next day the lawyer went to a barber shop and had himself fixed up in the best style of the tonsorial art, after which he took the train again for the same little station he had left the afternoon before.

As he turned into the path that led to Helen's house, he saw the burned-out coals and the tomato-can that the robber had used, and said aloud: "Poor dumb testimonials of a man's need! Good luck to you! You are as divinely here as anything else. You bear witness to the unity of mankind. You have served your purpose as well as my lady's silver or Satsuma!"

## CHAPTER XXIII

WHEN Mark Watkins stepped upon the veranda and saw Helen and Margaret working harmoniously together, he knew that everything was proving as Helen had predicted it would when she so lovingly attempted the rescue of the accused woman. Margaret's face had greatly changed since her release from jail and at times beamed with gratitude and love. He saw plainly that the commonwealth had gained materially from Helen's prompt interference with the staid machinery of the law. He greeted the two women as equals and for want of something better to say, inquired about the animals in the hospital.

"Getting on," said Margaret, with a little pride in her voice, "getting on. The colt begins to talk."

"Yes," said Helen, "you should see him watch us with his great confiding eyes. He seems to understand that we are his physicians."

"And have you other patients?" Mr. Watkins inquired.

Margaret laughed more heartily than Helen had ever seen her do before. "It would not do to tell you all the secrets of the hospital," she declared.

"You see," said Helen, "Margaret is getting ideas concerning the ethics of our profession."

Greatly amused at the conversation, Mr. Watkins asked,

"Can you not let me act as some sort of health-inspector and go with you to the barn? I should like to see the assortment of invalids you have there."

Margaret, seeing that he was really in earnest, gathered into a basket such things as she knew would be needed and the party set off for the barn. There they found plenty to do. A heifer, with a broken horn, stood mutely apart from the herd; an old horse, with a collar-worn breast, waited with a dumb consciousness of his dependence upon human hands; a chicken, fallen into a bin, peeped loudly for help. Margaret and Helen set about their work as though no visitor were present. First, the blood was washed from the heifer's horn and the wound bandaged with cloths. Then, the mash for the colt having been forgotten, Margaret was despatched to the house to bring it.

"You seem to have disarmed Margaret of her villainous temper. How did you do it?" inquired the lawyer as soon as she had gone.

"By loving her, and setting her to work," answered Helen.

"That is the science of human conduct!"

"Oh," said the girl, with a modest blush, "I do not know anything about science. I only know that I needed Margaret and Margaret needed me."

Mark Watkins then told the whole story of his experience with the highwayman, concluding with,

"I believe that, if properly managed, all people might be placed in such relationship to each other



that they would recover from their errors and become good citizens."

Helen felt greatly complimented, but said very modestly:

"I am afraid you over-estimate my skill. On a large place like this, there is so much to be done, and so few who have any talent for doing it, that Margaret just fitted in."

The lawyer looked steadfastly into her fresh young face. Beside this girl, the women whom he knew in town seemed mere bundles of clothing, labeled with names. He drew nearer and took her hand in his own. It was a little hand, already hardened by labor, and, just now, smelling of carbolic acid; but he bent and kissed it, and said,

"Helen, I want to thank you for having led me out of the inferno into which I had fallen. You have done no more for Margaret than you have done for me. We poor men are very prone to make hells for ourselves to live in. My father believed in a lake of fire and the little accessories of pitchforks and brimstone. And I think I had demonstrated, before I knew you, that the old doctrine was true."

"You lawyers have such a talent for word-painting, that I hardly know whether to believe you or not," returned Helen.

In spite of the carbolic, he still held her hand and now drew her gently into the path that led over to the little graveyard.

"You do not understand me," he continued. "I am trying to tell you that when I first knew you I had lost my way. Not until you taught me, not

until you worked upon me a miracle of healing, did I see any light. Your ministrations to Margaret, your far-reaching philosophy of life, your love for animals — all these things have turned me round and round and made me see what a strange splendor can come into a human life.”

“Oh,” the girl protested again, “I am sure you over-estimate me. I know so little of the great things of life, of art, literature, music,—I know almost nothing that you know. The opportunities that have been poured out so profusely upon you, I have not been blessed with at all. I feel just like a little country girl when I go into town!”

“Art, literature, and music are yours by divine right. The essence of them is what you are! Something written in the book of fate, ages ago, gave them to you. What I have done is only what I have learned in books. I have attained to the rank in my profession at which I aimed, only to find that my soul cries for something not yet realized. It cries out for the companionship of a pure woman; but I have had no training for the society of the virtuous. If I had, I should ask you to join me in working out the rest of this hard problem of life. Before I met you, women had seemed to me to be human beings in search of selfish conquests. But now I feel that life is, after all, only a search for a mate, and that all the pain of the world comes from loneliness.”

They had reached the graveyard, and there, with the peace of the dead about them, the lawyer told Helen about Luisa and the blue-eyed one and con-

cluded by saying, "But a worse degradation would befall me, if I were to drag your beautiful soul down to my personal ignominy."

"I do not comprehend all you say," Helen answered, "but I am sure you are filled with the superstitions of our ancestors. You know that I have no love for those old-fashioned ideas. To me all children are in their places by divine appointment; any other conception of them would be a direct blasphemy against God. I see in them human beings moving toward their appointed goal. Neither have I any prejudice against a man on account of his sins. If I read aright, there is no sin but carries with it experience, and we are in the world to gather experience. Are you so old-fashioned that you still talk of unpardonable sin? Nothing so far as I know is unpardonable."

"Hold that opinion as one to be reversed upon further testimony," warned the lawyer, with a smile. Then he added, more seriously, "You do not know all, yet. You will despise me when you do."

The conversation might have embarrassed a maiden of the blushing order, but Helen answered bravely,

"I have no desire to know anything. I see no value in knowing."

"If you believe in me, what possible thing can be a bar to our working together? I do not know much of what is commonly called love; but companionship in a great word — it is the only word! I shall never ask what you have done; it makes no possible difference to me. Besides, there is another thing that

appeals to me with tremendous force. It is the children! Do not they need a mother as well as a father? I have seen it written somewhere that the greatest motherhood is that of being a mother to other women's children. Might I not be the person to train those little feet to walk uprightly before the God of truth and love?"

Mark Watkins looked off toward a purple cañon, cut deep into the side of San Antonio. His readiness of tongue somehow failed him utterly at this moment. When he again had command of himself, he turned to Helen and said:—

"Are you sure that you have counted the cost? I have a hideous dread that the people whom you know in town, and even those whom you have known all your life here in the country, would regard you with contempt, should you marry me."

"There is something greater than counting cost. It is to go on, unshaken, toward the best that we know."

"You set aside all my preconceived opinions, and make me afraid of myself," he cried.

"Your opinions are too ponderous. You are too far from your base of supplies. You must try farming; you must learn the language of the animals."

Mark Watkins had no answer ready. He tried, with that smooth tongue of his, to formulate some sentence that should express his feelings, but he stumbled like an inexperienced boy.

"If I could only put into words the gratitude I feel," he began. But Helen raised her hand in re-

pudiation and sought to draw his attention to a desert bloom at the upper end of the little graveyard.

"See the bravery of color in that drouth-defying plant! It requires no water, nor any care, and yet its waxen petals never droop."

"Yes," he returned, "but you know that it has generations of drouth-defying ancestors back of it. It did not get its strength in one year, nor in one century."

Without catching the drift of his observation, Helen began to speak of her mother.

"My mother loved all the desert plants and watched for their flowering from year to year. Sometimes she used to call them her friends, come back from a long journey."

"Tell me more about your mother; in all our talks you have said little about her."

"As I remember her now, she always had a book in her hand. The large library in the house belonged to her father, and upon his death was shipped around the Horn. She revelled in the collection as though they were living friends. If I have come to any clear understanding of life I owe it to her cultured mind and her constant and loving advice."

"Then the drouth-defying plant is, after all, a good symbol."

"Do you mean that people inherit their natures from their ancestors?" Helen interrogated.

"Yes. Characteristics are not acquired in one generation."



"No. But we can begin any time, can we not?" was her reply.

"The road is very long — oh, very long," he replied meditatively.

"Not long when compared with eternity, is it? But," she continued, "I did not tell you that my mother desired of all things that I should become a missionary."

"What! To go to China or the Fiji Islands?"

"Oh, no. Her idea of missionary work was to keep very close to one's own home. Often and often she found work to do at our very door! But I saw dimly and not at all as she wished me to do. I had visions of art and sat musing upon the sky and mountains. Even yet, I dabble in colors, as you know. But I am giving it up for more practical work. Everything that is in trouble looks at me and I cannot escape. They can compel me to leave off painting and come with them."

"But does not this eternal round of work tire you?"

"No. It rests me. It is only when I stop that I am tired."

They returned to the boulder at the head of old Joe's grave and she told him the story of Joe's adoption into the family and of her watch by his bedside, while John Stanford and Mr. Austin were off searching for testimony. And then she confessed that she had cried herself sick before she had found the courage to dismiss them.

Mark Watkins realized now how he had, unconsciously, tried to drag Helen out of her pace.



"I am the one to blame in the matter," he admitted. "It is the way we lawyers work up cases; but I can see now that it is all wrong. I plead guilty! I should like to file a demurrer against myself."

Helen laughed. "You must bring me out some lawbooks to read. I see I must learn a new language, even the language of complaints, and writs, and demurrers."

"You shall begin with the legal status of women," he said. "You know you are classed with criminals and Indians, do you not?"

"Yes. But I love criminals and Indians. I get on better with them than I do with the ladies in town. They have such a burden to bear in keeping up appearances that I lose patience with them."

"Yes, I know, I know," said the lawyer.

They walked slowly away, leaving the owls and the old cypress tree to keep their vigil over the graves. Half-way down the path, Helen again drew her lover aside to look at a maguey plant which had shot up a stem twenty feet in height.

"See," she said, "when this plant was last in bloom, my mother was here, and we stood together to look at its wealth of cream-colored bloom. Through all these patient years, it has been storing up strength for another blossoming season. And, oh, to think; instead of my mother, you are here with me, and we are trying to make something out of life's meanings. I wonder if it is a prophetic circumstance!"

He looked at her and smiled at her fancy; but

soon he answered seriously: "Perhaps I have lain dormant for some triumphant blossoming season. Perhaps human beings can break into new life, after long years of sleep."

"That idea is beautiful," she said. "Do you know, I sometimes think that our beautiful thoughts are foreshadowings of something that is to be?"

They turned toward the house with its shaded veranda, eloquent of peace and home, and Helen resumed:

"But there is something more serious to be done than to conjure up poetic visions. We must decide about the children. If you are willing to entrust them to me, there must be no delay about it."

With great firmness, she continued: "I would have them grow into this home, and come to fit the landscape as the maguey and the cypress do, each as divinely in his place as the other, each raised up for a particular purpose. I would have them forget any other life, and only know what it is to be welcome and well-beloved."

When she ceased speaking, there was something in the lawyer's eyes that made the Sierra Madre mountains seem dim. After a long silence, he said earnestly:—

"Are you sure that, as time goes on, you will not be shocked at the ugly scars I have bestowed upon my offspring? Do you know anything of the sins that are visited upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation?"

"Ah!" she replied, "you have lost the thread of our new thought. Yours is an evil dream of the

orthodox mind. You are a true son of your father."

"But," said he, "can you endure it if after all they give no love in return for your great love? Might not they break the charm of your life, if they should prove unworthy?"

"The charm of my life would be broken if I did not have them. I have no fear on the score of unrequited love. I am willing to risk all I have that there is a law which prevents such occurrences. Do you not see that love begets love and that the pay is certain?"

"No," he admitted, "I can only see a little way into your thinking."

Helen returned to the subject of the children with more determination than he had ever before seen her show.

"In taking the children, I do not mean to give them lectures, and a little charity. I mean to give them myself, and I know perfectly well they will respond to me."

Mark Watkins, usually so competent to argue, was singularly incompetent now, but finally said:—

"I give it up. I do not know how to handle my own case."

"Let it be without handling; let it take care of itself."

The great thought underlying her arguments was so apparent that he made no further reply, but sat silently looking at the lengthening shadows of the old pepper tree. The striking of the clock aroused him and he entreated:—

“Command me again that I may be sure I know how to proceed with the children.”

She blushed and laughed outright. “I know how to deliver a bunch of steers on foot; I know that there must be no loss on the way, else the whole contract is void, but how can I put these conditions into a bargain concerning the children?”

“The comedy would outweigh the tragedy,” he remarked.

“But,” she continued, “I do mean that you must bring them all, and deliver them as soon as possible. You need not brand or ear-mark them.”

“I see that the order is mandatory, and I shall obey,” he said, and, taking his hat, bade her good-bye.

What mysterious knowledge Nero had of the business, Helen never knew, but for the first time he came out from under the bench and followed Mr. Watkins to the railway station, and then returned to his sleeping place.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

It was a serious day's work for Mark Watkins when he went to the convent for his children. There was no romance about it, no sealed orders by which the purport of the business could be kept out of sight. The clock was striking twelve when his carriage rattled up to the gate, and he, with all the courage he could command, rang the bell.

Sister Simplicitas was aghast when she learned the nature of his errand. She had thought that his children belonged to Holy Church, and she had a notion that the change would be a bad one; she feared Helen might sow seeds of unbelief in their minds or that she might even be the terrible "new woman."

All these objections, Mr. Watkins passed over with little argument and came safely out of the building with Luisa, the blue-eyed one, and his son.

Whatever ache there was in his heart was more than offset by the remembrance of a little woman who waited for him on the veranda of an old adobe house out on the edge of the desert. His love for Helen was of a kind absolutely new to his experience.

As one who welcomes a new born child to its place in his heart he welcomed her. There was no selfish desire. There was no gnawing jealousy, but all day

long the uplift of a new and melodious voice in his life.

As for Helen, she pondered long and lovingly over her future. The prospect of intellectual companionship for life and the duties she should owe the children to whom she had now consecrated herself in the holy office of motherhood, filled her with a sense of joy that overflowed in ripples of song as she passed from room to room on her round of duties. Something she knew of the great responsibility she had assumed; something she realized of the dangers that would beset the paths of the children as they grew to man and womanhood. Intuition more than reason told her that she must guard against the vices that were inherent in them; but she felt sure of the power to save and to bless.

When the children arrived she claimed the privilege of living very near to them and as the years went by she confided to them all that she herself knew of the temptations that war upon the higher nature. "Say all the things that are in your heart," she said to them, "and I shall take it as evidence of your honesty and truthfulness."

She early taught them the vicious consequences of impure thinking, but against the old dogma of sin visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation she was in constant revolt.

It was eight years before the old maguery tree blossomed again and Mark Watkins and his wife had striven with each other for that innermost mystery that turns wedlock into a sacred office. Other sons and daughters had been born to them and their home



was the best that falls to the lot of human beings. Their love was of the kind that points to the destiny of the soul. Whither it leads we may not fully know but one thing is certain, the thick musk-scented groves of sensualism were forever passed.









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